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'Narrating the Nation?': Post-Colonial Perspectives on Patrick Kavanagh's The Great Hunger (1942) and Brendan Kennelly's Cromwell (1983).

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INTRODUCTION

THE NATURE OF IRISH POST-COLONIALISM

The nature of Irish post-colonialism is not fixed. The chronological periods surrounding the colonial era in Irish history are relatively unproblematic, but the real debate emerges in the analysis of the effect of the colonial era on perceptions of national identity and how these perceptions were altered or underpinned in the post-colonial nation state. The complexities involved in accurately defining the coloniser and the colonised, the colonial identity and the post-colonial identity, serve to illuminate the fact that these concepts are based on interpretations of complex and unresolved relationships which have emerged over hundreds of years. To arrive prematurely at definitive conclusions as to their nature only serves to perpetuate stereotypes beyond which the post-colonial debate must move. The best that can be hoped for is that a reasonable and sustainable position can be found in relation to the larger question of Ireland's complicated post-colonial identity. The nature of Irish colonisation and its consequences require the examination of the plurality of possible interpretations. There are no fixed boundaries but rather a series of relational positions which must be occupied on the nature of possession and dispossession, cultural connectedness and dislocation and consequent perceptions of national identity.

In attempting to position Patrick Kavanagh's 1942 poem The Great Hunger and Brendan Kennelly's 1983 epic sequence Cromwell at

crucial points in the counter-hegemonic development of Irish post-colonial concepts of the essence of the nation, it is necessary to identify central theories that tie the two texts together. While occupying relatively different historical positions, both texts seek to counter dominant and popular conceptions of national identity by exploring, in detail, the imagination and experiences of two dominant figures in Irish national hagiography, namely the ubiquitous rural peasant and the 'Butcher of Drogheda', Oliver Cromwell.

However, before discussing the degree to which The Great Hunger (henceforth abbreviated as TGH) and Cromwell challenge dominant perceptions of Irish national identity, it is important to articulate and elaborate the fundamental principles and terminology governing the use of such a difficult and contentious term as 'post-colonial' in order to construct a superstructure within which the critique offered in the respective poems becomes clarified. This introduction will look at the relevance of the work of Benedict Anderson, Homi K. Bhaba, the Indian Subaltern Studies Group, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and Edward W. Said, amongst others, which the thesis argues provides the necessary theoretical framework within which the relevance and impact of the two texts may be more readily understood. A close study of some Irish post-colonial theorists, including David Lloyd, Luke Gibbons, Declan Kiberd and Colin Graham, will place post-colonial theory in a specifically Irish context which should further enhance the paradigmatic arrangement of the two texts.

1. The Nature of Irish Post-Colonialism.

Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams indicate the complexities and difficulties surrounding the applicability of the term 'post-colonial', even to politically independent countries which have experienced a colonial presence. They argue that 'the persistence of neo-colonialist or imperialist practices in the contemporary world is a very obvious, perhaps the most serious, obstacle to any unproblematic use of the term post-colonial' (1), and this is an idea that directly impinges upon any usage of the term in relation to the Irish colonial experience. While the chronological moment of the origin of the Free State, established by the ratification of the treaty to end the Anglo-Irish war by the Irish Parliament on January 7, 1922, is unproblematic, the huge shadow cast over the economic, social, cultural and political activity of the new government by the colonial experience and by an innately conservative Irish social order meant, in reality, according to Terence Brown, 'the establishment of an Irish state notable for a stultifying lack of social, cultural and economic ambition' (2). The inheritance of a stagnant economic regime in effect stymied any plans for social expansion while the overwhelmingly Catholic, rural and agriculturally based social order combined to produce, again in Brown's parlance, 'a social order largely composed of persons disinclined to contemplate any change other than the political change that independence represented' (3). Consequently, if one accepts Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's important insistence that a theory

of post-colonialism necessarily involves a degree and depth of mental as well as physical de-colonisation (4), then it certainly can be argued that 1922 cannot be heralded as the definitive moment of Irish post-colonial development but rather as the chronological departure point of a different political configuration. Indeed, Stephen Slemon argues that 'definitions of the post-colonial, of course, vary widely, but for me the concept proves most useful when not used synonymously with a post-independence historical period in once-colonised nations, but rather when it locates a specifically anti- or post-colonial discursive purchase in culture' (5). It is precisely in this context that both TGH and Cromwell achieve their critical importance. By articulating voices hitherto marginalised in Ireland's post-independence social and cultural hegemony, these texts engage in a process of de-colonisation from both the colonial and post-colonial eras. Therefore, the term 'post-colonial', in reference to TGH and Cromwell, is principally an acknowledgment of their crucial role in the demythologisation, reassessment and repositioning of crucial foundational cultural icons of the Free State rather than merely their chronological location vis-a-vis the official end of the colonial epoch. Post-colonialism, in the Irish context, represents more of an intellectual positioning than a chronological departure.

The stagnation that characterised the early decades of the Irish Free State, a situation which continued after the establishment of the Republic in 1949 (6), stifled any significant social, cultural or political opposition to the prevailing post-colonial

climate which was exemplified by the political and social philosophies of the dominant figure of that era, Eamon de Valera. Tim Pat Coogan's assertion that, on the whole, 'de Valera did little that was useful and much that was harmful' (7) points to the inertia and conservatism that paralysed the new state, characterised as it was by lofty rhetoric concerning self-reliance on the one hand and a tacit acceptance of the economic and social necessity of widespread emigration on the other (8). Terence Brown describes the situation thus: 'In a dominant Irish Ireland consensus, ideas about Irish identity - compacted of a restrictive Catholicism, which emphasised the perils of uninhibited sexuality, and a limited version of Gaelic tradition, which emphasised its rural roots - were the substance of the nationalism that lent legitimacy to the new political order' (9). It was only through the work of counter-revival writers such as Sean O'Faolain (1900-91), Frank O'Connor (1903-66), AE (George Russell: 1867-1935) and Patrick Kavanagh (1904-67) that a critical oppositional perspective on the popular perception of canonical aspects of Irish identity begins to emerge (10). It can be argued that in their writings lie the stirrings of the first post-colonial debate over Irish identity as they consistently questioned the canonical icons of Irish cultural identity, performing, in Terence Brown's words, 'a vital function in maintaining the sense of ideological alternatives' (11). TGH played a central role in the establishment of that cultural opposition because it undermined popular perceptions of one of de Valera's most cherished philosophical, cultural, economic and social foundations, namely the small, self-sufficient, rural,

Catholic farmer (a fuller examination of the counter-revival can be found in Chapter One, 1.2). TGH is a crucial example of what Homi K. Bhabha refers to as 'counter- narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalising boundaries', a text whose effect is to 'disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities' (12). Indeed, Bhabha's analysis of the hermeneutics of the nation further place TGH at a crucial point in the development of Irish post-colonial concepts of national identity. Bhabha argues that 'the political unity of the nation consists in a continual displacement of its irredeemingly plural modern space into a signifying space that is archaic and mythical, paradoxically representing the nation's modern territoriality, in the patriotic, atavistic temporality of Traditionalism' (13), a process that can be seriously undermined by the filling of that 'signifying space' with tangible, unheroic and demonstrably realistic human experiences. One of the significant effects of TGH was the demystification of the peasant and the text is strewn with an unrelenting realism that certainly stood in stark opposition to the popular perceptions of rural life. If a feature of the post-colonial condition is the emergence of counter-narratives of the nation, then TGH can clearly be regarded as a hugely significant and influential post-colonial text manifest through the oppressive nature of the existence of Patrick Maguire, the poem's protagonist. Furthermore, Bhabha argues that 'the scraps, patches, and rags of daily life must be repeatedly turned into the signs of a national culture' (14) if a representative narrative is to emerge, a notion that finds an

interesting parallel in the narrator's assertion in TGH that Maguire resembled 'A ragged sculpture of the wind ' (1.791). Bhaba extends his argument on representative narratives by arguing that 'the present of a people's history is a practice that destroys the constant principles of the national culture that attempt to hark back to a 'true' national past, which is often represented in the reified forms of realism and stereotype' (15). This notion of the difficulties and dangers inherent in any national self-definition suggests that texts such as TGH fulfil a crucial role in articulating what Frantz Fanon referred to as 'the zone of occult instability where the people dwell' (16) while concurrently undermining fixed representations of national identity. TGH explores Maguire's zone of instability to the point where it explodes an Irish model of what Bhaba refers to as 'continuist national narratives' (17) thereby placing itself at 'a crucial embryonic stage in the emergence of a genuinely post-colonial intellectual climate. By attempting to recover aspects of Irish culture that had been glossed over in the drive for a sustainable national narrative, Kavanagh produced in TGH what amounted to the first significant counter-narrative of the Irish nation and it is perhaps this fact that has attracted so many contemporary poets, including Brendan Kennelly and Seamus Heaney, to admire the honesty, freshness and intellectual liberation offered by the poem. Bhabha's assertion of the inherent instability of national narratives further places TGH at a crucial point in the development of Irish culture. The life depicted in the poem is inherently mundane, or 'sad, grey, twisted, blind, just awful' (18) as Kavanagh described it, and

it is difficult if not impossible to draw encompassing grand national narratives from the text because Maguire exists in what Bhaba describes, in a different context, as the 'ambivalent margin of the nation-space' (19). Maguire represents nothing more than his own lived experience, yet implicitly the poem suggests that this lived experience is in fact typical of those around whom grand national narratives are constructed and in whose anonymous name social, cultural and political policies are formed.

Colin Graham identifies two central aspects of models of post-colonial theory that have a particular bearing on the emergence of contemporary forms of Irish post-coloniality (20). A brief examination of his ideas can shed further light on the complex nature of the Irish post-colonial experience. Firstly, Graham argues that post-colonial criticism has emerged as an ethical consideration of the essential wrongs perpetrated by the colonisers on the colonised (21). This perspective involves a clear and unequivocal identification of precisely who is the coloniser and who is the colonised. Now this perspective either consciously ignores or subconsciously sublimates the range of contradictions, oppositions, over-lappings and connections that inevitably compose something as complex and contentious as a post-colonial national identity. This thesis argues that the ethical consideration of the quintessentially evil nature of the colonial exercise in the Irish context falsely exonerated the political leaders of the Free State from the introspective, conservative and moribund social, cultural and political policies

that were a hallmark of the early decades of its existence. A central core of 'Irishness' consequently emerged from this ethical programme, a core based on the primacy of the married family unit, small self-sufficient farming units, and the personal and social morality espoused by the Catholic Church hierarchy (22). This core had to be protected from what the Free State perceived as invidious neo-colonial influences that sought to undermine the fragility of the essential Irish values that had sustained a popular model of national identity throughout the colonial era. A central feature of that essence was the peasant, who, to adopt Graham's paradigm, in many cases was regarded as the last true vestige of a pure, Catholic, non-materialist Irish existence. For example, writing in 1907, J.M.Synge lamented, in Keatsian style, the onset of change he had noticed while visiting the remote Aran Islands off the west coast between 1889-91:

'The thought that this island will gradually yield to the ruthlessness of 'progress' is as the certainty that decaying age is moving always nearer the cheeks it is your ecstasy to kiss. How much of Ireland was formerly like this and how much of Ireland is today Anglicised and civilised and brutalised?' (23).

This is a most insightful passage as it highlights the often-made connection in the early decades of Irish independence between Anglicisation, masquerading under the guise of social and economic progress, and a profound sense of social and cultural loss, further supporting Graham's assertion of the ethical undertones in the colonial paradigm. Consequently, the peasant

is closely associated with colonial anti-Anglicisation, and more importantly, the post-colonial necessity for de-Anglicisation. What TGH indicated was that this vestige of an Irish national essence was, in fact, an unwitting pawn in the manufacturing of politically inspired national narratives designed to legitimise social and cultural policies. Synge's romanticism contrasts sharply with the writings of Frank O'Connor, one of the leading intellectuals behind the counter-revival movement. It was to this very progress that O'Connor turned his critical attention but his conclusions are markedly different to those of Synge and typify the mood out of which TGH was written. O'Connor too laments the progress he witnesses in Ireland but it is the lack of any tangible economic or social advances that perturbs him rather than the disappearance of a romanticised Atlantic lifestyle. In his seminal essay 'The Future of Irish Literature', first published in the same issue of Horizon that published TGH, he attacks the 'piety and puritanism of Catholic Ireland' and seeks an Irish literature in which 'the characters begin to articulate: to demand a fuller, richer life for themselves' (24). Synge's bastions of simplicity are described by O'Connor as places of 'emptiness and horror' from which writers must struggle for self-definition. Indeed, in portraying 'Mr. de Valera's dream of a non-entity state entirely divorced from the world' (25) O'Connor was in fact blurring the ethical distinctions between the coloniser and the colonised and initiating a strong anti-nativist post-colonial perspective that attracted Patrick Kavanagh amongst others. This notion reflects the second of Colin Graham's assertions about models of post-colonial theory and their

consequent effects on the Irish experience, namely that 'in recent years post-colonialism has been involved in building a critique of the ideology and praxis of nationality in the post-colonial world' (26). Consequently, texts which challenged the canon of cultural hegemony in the newly emerged Free State became the genuine sites of an authentic post-colonial criticism and as such became important milestones in the emergence of a more self-critical and self-aware national literature. In TGH, therefore, Kavanagh was engaged in an early example of an important process described by Homi K. Bhabha:

'What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood -singular or communal- that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself' (27).

Indeed, Bhabha's identification of 'innovative sites of collaboration and contestation' applies equally to the themes explored in Brendan Kennelly's Cromwell, a poem that can be viewed as a contemporary enquiry into the nature of Irish national identity. While TGH marks a vital initial opposition to the dominant hegemonies of the Free State, Kennelly proceeds to explore models of identity as hybrid, diffracted and de-centred

fields of enquiry where the central grand narratives of history are subjected to an ongoing process of deconstruction and reconstruction. Kennelly's treatment of the nature and function of history, a crucial hermeneutical tool in the construction of models of national identity, centres on a process of decolonisation that sets Cromwell at an important point in the development of contemporary Irish post-colonial theory. Kennelly, this thesis argues, is engaged in the vital strategy of the dismantling of certain dominant grand narratives of Irish identity, such as nationalist historiography, a process designed to explore contradictions and connections and to focus on the 'sites of collaboration and contestation' within which a positioning in relation to national and personal identity can occur. Kennelly undermines the historical imperatives that underpin concepts of the Irish nation by engaging in a frank and revelatory imaginary dialogue with Oliver Cromwell, a man whose huge presence in Irish history has come to symbolise, indeed embody, the inherently contradictory logic governing the entire colonial process. The poem explores contradictory interpretations of defining national characteristics such as language, religion and historical perspectives and seeks to uncover an inherent instability in an apparently secure Irish national iconography. By articulating the voice of Oliver Cromwell, Kennelly extends Kavanagh's methodology of peasant deconstruction into the contentious field of Irish historical enquiry and attempts, again in Ngugi's paradigm, a form of post-colonial decolonisation through a reappraisal not only of the specific role of Oliver Cromwell in Irish history but, perhaps more significantly, his

unwitting role in the crystallisation of all that the colonial presence in Ireland came to represent in the centuries after his brief visit. What Kennelly highlights is the fact that Cromwell actually occupies one of Bhaba's 'in-between' spaces, a crucial site of contestation and enquiry, rather than the traditional nationalist interpretation in which his role and influence are fixed. This is precisely the critical success of the poem in that the protagonist, Mr. M.P.G.M. Buffun, engages in a highly charged self-analysis that ultimately results in few, if any, definitive conclusions, pointing significantly, perhaps, to David Lloyd's assertion of the 'insurmountable contradictions of identity' (28). It is only through a painful exploration of the points of contestation in the act of his attempted self-definition that Buffun gradually realises that the principles which appear to govern his identity are themselves open to scrutiny and are inherently unstable. Through this process Buffun has arrived at perhaps the supreme post-colonial moment, that of the denial of all grand narratives in favour of a philosophy of resistance to their imposition. The questioning of the stability of terms such as 'colonised' and 'coloniser' by critics such as Bhaba¹⁴ (29) has an important bearing on definitions of a genuine Irish post-colonial positioning in that such criticism begins to unravel polemic notions of Irish identity in favour of a more hybrid, contradictory perspective.

However, there are important problems, not only of perspective but of theoretical hierarchies, to be overcome in the attempted formulation of a distinctively Irish post-colonial perspective,

and these problems are best illustrated by the categorisation of Ireland in a significant and influential book dealing with post-colonial theory and literature, namely The Empire Writes Back. Published in 1989, this text is described by Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge as 'a lucid, judicious and representative text which is destined to play a decisive role in this emerging field' (30). In this wide-ranging attempt to galvanise disparate post-colonial theories and literatures, the authors make the following startling assumption, which is apparently based loosely on Max Dorsinville's model of the relationship between dominated and dominating societies (31):

'A model such as Dorsinville's also makes less problematical the situation of Irish, Welsh and Scottish literatures in relation to the English 'mainstream'. While it is possible to argue that these societies were the first victims of English expansion, their subsequent complicity in the British imperial enterprise makes it difficult for colonised peoples outside Britain to accept their identity as post-colonial' (32).

This sweeping and unsupported dismissal of the existence, 'outside Britain', of a viable Irish post-colonial identity in the face of an apparently complicit Anglo-Irish minority ignores the crucial experience of the indigenous majority whose previously ignored voice forms the basis of a good deal of post-colonial Irish literature. Indeed, the very complexity and continuation of the Irish colonial experience, extended as it is over centuries of varied colonial intervention, should be of

great interest to the post-colonial scholar by virtue of its paradoxical proximity and distance from the colonial centre. The easy movement from 'English expansion' to 'the British imperial exercise' belies an enormously complicated history which, contradictorily, is more faithfully represented when the authors of The Empire Writes Back turn their attention to the colonial experiences of the West Indies and the U.S.A., for example. It seems odd that soon after such an arbitrary and facile treatment of Irish, Welsh and Scottish identities, the authors should write that 'both literary theorists and cultural historians are beginning to recognise cross-culturality as the potential termination point of an apparently endless human history of conquest and annihilation justified by the myth of group 'purity', and as the basis on which the post-colonial world can be creatively stabilised' (33). This failure to deal with the contradiction of the 'myth of group purity' and the unconditional incorporation of Irish 'society' into the British imperial enterprise highlights the crucial importance of a carefully selected terminology and nomenclature for such a contentious term as 'post-colonial'. By contrast, Edward Said notices the 'similar processes' (34) to the experience of nationalism in Ireland that occurred in parts of Africa and Asia and he acknowledges the similar cultural responses to imperialism experienced by 'African, Caribbean, Irish, Latin American or Asian citizens' (35), thereby indicating the importance of the Irish colonial experience. In fact, Said points to a possible explanation for the failure of Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, the authors of The Empire Writes Back, to fully recognise

Ireland's post-colonial identity. In his 1993 book Culture and Imperialism, Said identifies three main strands 'of how imperialism's complex yet firm geographical move moves from the general to the specific' (36), the third of which refers directly to Ireland. Said argues that 'colonial space must be transformed sufficiently so as to no longer appear foreign to the imperial eye. More than any other of its colonies, Britain's Ireland was subjected to innumerable metamorphoses through repeated settling projects and, in culmination, its virtual incorporation in 1801 through the Act of Union'. Said continues and concludes that 'what was done in Ireland was also done in Bengal or, by the French, in Algeria' (37). It can be argued, therefore, that precisely because of the depth and success of the colonial exercise in Ireland, certain post-colonial critics suffer the same difficulties experienced by the colonisers themselves, namely an inability to distinguish between the composite elements, either coerced or cooperative, of nineteenth century British imperial design. The almost clichéd term 'British colonialism' belies an intricate matrix of class struggle, political ambition and economic expansion which should encourage a detailed analysis of its composite elements rather than the sweeping dismissals of Irish, Scottish and Welsh experiences offered in The Empire Writes Back. While the absorption of Ireland into the United Kingdom in 1801 certainly increased Irish influence in Britain, exemplified, for instance, in the political career of Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-91), it should not eradicate the validity or importance of a close examination of Ireland's complex colonial experience. The failure of an

important and influential text such as The Empire Writes Back adequately to take account of the Irish colonial experience points to the necessity for this experience to be clearly articulated beyond the confines of traditional post-colonial theories. One of the important places post-colonial theory must visit, therefore, is the locus of colonialism itself to appreciate the conflicting forces and ideologies that composed a far from unified imperial philosophy. Luke Gibbons comments:

'This is not to say, of course, that some Catholic or indigenous Irish did not buy into hegemonic forms of racism in the United States and Australia when they themselves managed to throw off the shackles of slavery or subjugation. But it is important to recognise that for what it is, a process of identifying with the existing supremacist ideologies, derived mainly from the same legacy of British colonialism from which they were trying to escape' (38).

2. The Tomb of the Unknown Peasant.

'No more arresting emblems of the modern culture of nationalism exist than cenotaphs and tombs of Unknown Soldiers. The public ceremonial reverence accorded these monuments precisely because they are either deliberately empty or no one knows who lies inside them, has no true precedents in earlier times. To feel the force of this modernity one has only to imagine the general reaction to the busybody who 'discovered' the Unknown Soldier's name or insisted on filling the cenotaph with some real bones.

Sacrilege of a strange, contemporary kind!' (39).

Benedict Anderson's reflections on the fate of the discoverer of the name of the Unknown Soldier, and the 'sacrilege' involved in the naming process, resonates with Patrick Kavanagh's naming of Patrick Maguire as the ubiquitous Irish peasant in the 1940's, a naming which undermined one of the foundational emblems of the newly established state. While Anderson's Unknown Soldier fulfils a crucial political, social and cultural function, it is principally that of epitomising what Anderson refers to as 'ghostly national imaginings' (40), with the anonymity of the soldier acting as a supreme example of the viability of what otherwise appears as the ambiguous and contradictory entity that is the nation. By virtue of his/her very anonymity, a great national narrative can be constructed around the apparent willingness of the unknown soldier to die for the over-arching concept of the nation. Similarly, in Anderson's construct, the Unknown Soldier suggests a linear connection between thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of people from different social and cultural traditions, united under the umbrella of the nation. Their deaths serve to feed the illusion of what Anderson refers to as 'the imagined community' (41) in that their eagerness (coercion is discreetly discounted) to engage in the ultimate personal sacrifice is perceived as conclusive 'proof' of the existence of the amorphous, politically engineered nation-state. In TGH, Patrick Kavanagh commits Anderson's great sacrilege by naming and voicing Patrick Maguire, a rural Irish peasant whose previously ill-defined and 'unknown' existence bolstered the very

essence of the Irish Free State and its political philosophy and who, again in this 'unknown' state, embodied all the virtues that the Irish nation had held secure in the face of what was perceived as the perfidious British colonial and, equally if not more importantly, post-colonial influence. Here lies the crucial role of TGH in the development of Ireland's post-colonial identity, described by Peter Fallon and Derek Mahon as 'a liberation to younger poets like John Montague and Seamus Heaney' (42). TGH sounds a note of resistance to the cultural monolith of the peasant that was fundamentally to undermine its authenticity. Antoinette Quinn notes that TGH 'disposes of a literary myth of the importance of peasantry which had flourished in English poetry since Wordsworth published the preface to the Lyrical Ballads' (43) and it is this acknowledgement of the significance and reality of the local that is one of Kavanagh's most important poetic legacies. The impact of Kavanagh and TGH on the development of contemporary Irish poetry is undeniable and is recognised by both critics and poets alike. Augustine Martin describes TGH as 'the great poem of Irish Catholic sensibility' (44) while Francis Stuart notes that 'Kavanagh's importance lies partly in the fact that his is a new voice saying what nobody else has either the utter detachment, the insight or the courage to say for a long time' (45). Brendan Kennelly recalls 'transcribing TGH by hand from a copy held in the National Library' (46) and realising that the local could be a valid and rewarding poetic source while northern poet Medbh Mc Guckian notes that 'as the first Catholic rural poet to emerge after partition he was nevertheless a Northerner from the controversial

border country who meant a great deal to Heaney and Muldoon, Montague and Carson, all of whom mean a lot to me' (47). Indeed, John Montague has written that 'I gradually became aware of TGH's importance, as I grew into poetry myself, and, of course, meeting the man, who was seismic. It took me a while to realise how important and relevant the poem was but I was fascinated by the loose structure which is, I think, influenced by The Waste Land' (48). Paul Durcan comments that 'it was Patrick Kavanagh's Zen Buddhist like philosophy of life that changed my life and, I dare say, the course of contemporary Irish poetry' (49). The importance of both TGH as an individual poem and the poetry of Kavanagh in general, therefore, revolves around the change initiated by his belief in the local and his articulation of a hitherto unheard voice. When Anderson argues that 'a nation is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship' (50), then the undermining of that concept of the nation begins when inequalities and exploitations that compose much of Maguire's life and community are openly discussed and put on rare public show. Because TGH is the first sustained critique of the Irish peasant lifestyle, it severely undermined the cosy images of rural contentment that formed an integral part of the popular image of the Irish nation pedalled by both church and state in the early decades of the Free State, echoing Michael O'Loughlin's assertion that 'what Kavanagh bequeathed was not so much a cultural orthodoxy, as a critical attitude to any such orthodoxy' (51).

In many ways, TGH articulates a unique Irish equivalent of the history and nature of what Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) referred to in his Prison Notebooks as 'the subaltern classes' (52), those groups in society excluded and marginalised from the avenues of power by 'the historical unity of the ruling classes' (p.52) as manifested in the organs of the state. The Irish peasants formed a huge subaltern class in the early decades of the Free State (53), their lives romanticised to the degree where they represented a mythical Irish essence. This image of Ireland was best captured in de Valera's St. Patrick's day address delivered in 1943, in which he imagined 'a land whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose fields and villages would be joyous with the sounds of industry, with the romping of sturdy children, the contests of athletic youths and the laughter of comely maidens, whose firesides would be the forums for the wisdom of serene old age' (54), an image that, in Seamus Deane's words, 'has since been an occasion of some amusement and bitterness, since, subsequently to this, the great tide of emigration began, the Irish language continued to wither and the "unity of the national territory" became even more improbable' (55). Furthermore, as Gramsci notes, 'the history of subaltern groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic' (P.54-5) and therefore it is very difficult for subaltern groups, such as rural peasants, to construct a history or identity outside that of the dominant hegemonic interpretations. Because 'subaltern groups are always subject to the activity of ruling groups' (p.55) their self-definition becomes increasingly difficult and therefore a text such as TGH becomes concurrently more important

in the emergence of a counter-hegemonic identity. Gramsci propounds that 'every trace of independent initiative on the part of subaltern groups should therefore be of incalculable value for the integral historian' (p.55) and it can be argued strongly that TGH is of similarly incalculable value in the articulation of the existence and identity of the subaltern Irish peasant and in the inevitable yet slow de-mystification of the majority peasant class. Kavanagh's subaltern peasant lived a life which was, in his words, 'the usual barbaric life of the Irish country poor' (56) and the voice given to Maguire by Kavanagh reflects this pitiful existence. However, another interesting perspective on the often subtle manifestations of the Irish post-colonial experience, and indeed the role of TGH in altering that experience, can be gained by a brief examination of the Indian Subaltern Studies group of historians and cultural commentators whose work has been edited by Ranajit Guha (57). Their application of Gramscian ideologies to the post-colonial Indian nation parallels many of the feelings of frustration expressed by the counter-revival writers in Ireland in the 1940's in relation to the dominant cultural and political narratives pedalled by the power brokers of the new state. Colin Graham has appositely summarised one of the outcomes of their (Indian Subalterns) important work: 'Thus, no longer can the post-colonial nation be regarded as a triumph of an oppressed people - rather it is an aping and repetition of the colonial structures which it displaced, and a continuum of oppression for subaltern groups despite the narrative of liberation and freedom by which the post-colonial nation justifies its existence. This

reverberates into post-colonial cultural studies in an increasing acknowledgement that the concept of the nation, while a necessary part of the colonial/post-colonial teleology, is in itself an overhomogenising, oppressive ideology which elides the multiplicity of subaltern classes and groups and acts to maintain their subaltern status' (58).

Graham's observations on the continued oppression and displacement of the subaltern classes by the overriding concept of the post-colonial nation has strong parallels in an Irish context and further helps to place TGH at an important stage in a genuine reappraisal of a central aspect of Ireland's post-colonial identity. A text such as TGH serves as a crucial moment of resistance to the imposed orthodoxy of the new nation by implying the illusory nature of one of its foundational grand narratives. The elision of the subaltern is directly challenged in TGH through Kavanagh's close scrutiny of quotidian peasant reality and, while the term 'subaltern studies' had yet to be coined in the 1940's, the poem would certainly appear to be a representative example of an important and influential discourse in post-colonial theory. The village of Donaghmoyne is characterised by its ordinariness, details such as 'a dog lying on a torn jacket under a heeled-up cart' encapsulates the mundanity of life while Maguire's 'spirit is a wet sack flapping about the knees of time' (59). The peasant life as depicted in the TGH is a direct rebuff to the revivalist myths of nationhood that dominated the discourse over the nature and future of the Irish nation.

However, there is an important distinction between the Gramscian notion of the subaltern and the usage of the term by the Indian Subaltern Studies group which has a bearing in the significance of TGH. Whereas Gramsci notes an 'affiliation' (60) between the subaltern and the ruling groups and a desire by the former to supersede the latter, Colin Graham has noted the Subaltern Studies group has tended to portray the subaltern as 'a theoretical site of disempowered purity - social groupings apparently so subsumed by colonialism, capitalism and nationalist ideology and practice, that their oppression leaves them unsullied by these dominances', eventually functioning as 'a refuge for cultural and political authenticity' (61). This charge could not be levelled at TGH because, crucially, Maguire 'can neither be damned nor glorified' (1.782), his existence is characterised by a notable failure to resist his disempowerment and, more importantly, a suggestion that his own inertia and indifference are equal factors in his social marginalisation. While Maguire's existence certainly has a ring of authenticity to it, there is no suggestion of a residual moral sanctity existing at the heart of his life. In fact, Maguire is certainly not a figure of post-colonial 'disempowered purity'. He is more, perhaps, a personification of Gramscian complicity with the post-colonial order, albeit at a simplistic level, where his complicity is indicated by his expressed desire to rise above his lowly socio-economic position. His life acts as a counter-narrative to the de Valerian peasant ideal but there is no residual glory or purity attributable to his type of existence and here, in its covertly implied criticism, is one of the poem's

strengths. By eschewing a direct pedagogic assault on the nature of the new state for an apparently objective perspective on an individual experience, Kavanagh offers an alternative reading of the peasant narrative that, in Terence Brown's words, 'discovers in one small parish a deprivation and mute despair which in Ireland as a whole were to drive thousands of young men and women off the land to the industrial suburbs of Birmingham and London' (62). His existence is not one of honourable suffering but rather a disempowered and aimless ~~endurance~~ of harsh economic and social realities. Indeed, Brown neatly summarises the poem's significance and crucial position vis-a-vis Ireland's cultural hegemony: 'Kavanagh's poem (TGH) is an outraged cry of anger, an eloquently bleak riposte from the heart of the rural world to all those polemicists, writers and demagogues who in de Valera's Ireland sought to venerate the countryman's life from the study or political platform' (63). By naming, voicing and identifying the Irish peasant, Kavanagh robbed the Free State of one of its dominant cultural icons and set Irish poetry on the road to a genuinely post-colonial future.

The development of this post-colonial perspective can be traced in Kennelly's Cromwell, a poem in which the undermining of ideologies, hinted at in TGH, becomes a fragmented, nightmarish reality for the poem's protagonist, Buffun. By unravelling the mythologies shrouding Irish nationalism and British colonialism, Kennelly achieves the vital disconnection from history that a post-colonial perspective can offer. Colin Graham argues that post-colonial criticism should 'always attempt to resist arguing

'for' some cultural entity (the nation, the working classes, the peasant, the writer) and always question that apparent necessity' (64) and this is certainly what Kennelly attempts in his poem. Kennelly highlights the contradictions and hypocrisies inherent in definitions of Irish nationhood and nationality and indeed he appears to resist the imposition of the stereotypes and orthodoxisms that seek to shape what he argues is a fluid, hybrid and contradictory identity. The freedom sought by Buffun is an uneasy one because it involves a depth of engagement with that which he would willingly and perhaps gratefully ignore and it is a search that will lead him to the painful conclusion that he is 'lost' (C, 159) in the multiplicity of selves that struggle for expression. The poem develops the fragmentation hinted at by Kavanagh towards the notion of national hybridity suggested by Bhaba (65), pointing to an Irish exploration of what Bhaba refers to as 'complex strategies of cultural identification', pointing to 'the disjunctive forms of representation that signify a people, a nation, or a national culture' (66). Consequently, the expanding fragmentation of cultural identity that characterises Cromwell is a contemporary development of the tentative yet crucial initial probing of TGH, indicating that Irish identity is inherently complicated and characterised by competing ideologies and histories. For Kennelly, 'the imagination provides the most effective means of confronting and expressing the prejudices and inherited hatreds buried in the self until they exist before our eyes like so many lucid accusations confirming Ibsen's belief that poetry is a court of judgement on the soul' (67), a process fully engaged in Cromwell. The difficulties of

trying 'to substitute the uncertainties of altruistic exploration for the centuries of learned hate' (68) leads the poet into the critical area of the destabilisation of what Bhaba refers to as 'pedagogical knowledges and continuist national narratives' (69). Kennelly resists the labelling (Protestant, Catholic, Dub, Northerner, etc.) he perceives as disguising the complexities of Irish identity through his disruption of what Bhaba refers to as 'the reified forms of realism and stereotype' (70) that compose models of a 'true' national past. Buffun's conclusions are incomplete and ill-defined, his home described as a 'strange territory' (C.158), his identity 'shifting' (C.158) as he nears the end of his personal voyage of enquiry. When Buffun asserts that 'being lost in myself is the only way I can animate my foolish wits' (C.159), there is a strong echo of John Montague's contention that one of Kavanagh's paradoxical achievements was to 'liberate us into ignorance' (71), suggesting that one of the most significant of Kavanagh's legacies is the break he achieved away from a dominant cultural tradition towards what he described in his Self-Portrait as 'the reality of the spirit' (72). Again Kennelly appears to be moving towards the post-colonial position of resisting of grand national narratives, a state described by Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge as 'a typical configuration which is always in the process of change, never consistent with itself' (73).

3. The Irish Theorists.

'The centrality of the question of identity to Irish writing and

critical discussion of it since the nineteenth century is not due simply to the contingent influence of political preoccupations. Rather, it indicates the crucial function performed by literature in the articulation of those preoccupations, inasmuch as literary culture is conceived as offering not merely a path towards the resolution, but the resolution itself of the problems of subjective and political identity' (74).

David Lloyd's centralising of literature in the question of Irish national identity further emphasises the importance of both TGH and Cromwell as texts that jointly seek not necessarily a resolution of the complexities of national identity, but rather point to the inadequacies of rigid and identifiable models of national authenticity. Indeed, the corrosive and undermining influence of the two texts is illuminated by Lloyd's assertion that the principal function of Ireland's literary culture is to resolve the problems that arise over the question of 'subjective and political identity' in that neither text has pretensions to a resolution of the fundamental problems of personal and national identity other than the realisation of the incompleteness of that very identity, which, paradoxically, is the first step towards an attempted resolution. Interestingly, in his criticism of Seamus Heaney, Lloyd notes 'the cautious limits which Heaney's poetry sets around any potential for disruptive, immanent questioning' (75), a claim for a challenging literature that is certainly offered by both TGH and Cromwell. Lloyd argues that nationalism apes the imperial process in that 'the colonised subject is grasped as an object to be transformed quite

inauthentically into subjectivity by way of an absent, alien presence', thereby repeating 'the master narrative of imperialism' (76). The danger of this situation, in Lloyd's view, is that the nationalist drive for a post-colonial (true also of pre-colonial) national authenticity 'produces the hegemonic conditions for the ultimate perpetuation of imperial domination even after independence has been achieved' (77). It is therefore precisely in counter-hegemonic texts such as TGH and Cromwell that the process of decolonisation can be witnessed as both texts seek to disable cosy and self-reflective national narratives through a portrayal of characters and ideas nominally outside the drive for national authenticity. The discomfort raised by the texts forces a reappraisal of grand national narratives and thus a tentative step away from the claustrophobia of ideologies, principally nationalism, can be taken.

Indeed, Colin Graham has identified three possible ways in which post-colonialism in Ireland can break 'the endless and complex process in which it validates and is validated by forms of nationalism' and thus he argues that 'post-colonial theory should change perceptions of Ireland' (78). Firstly, Graham contends that the idea of hybridity, as espoused by Homi Bhaba and Robert Young, allows the focus to rest on the 'interaction of cultures in colonialism' (79) rather than on the inevitable and predictable concept of division. Certainly, Kennelly's Cromwell elucidates the overlapping and inter-relationships that have occurred in Ireland's complex colonial experience and such an examination lends itself towards a more inclusive and

encompassing composite national identity. Buffun admits that he is composed of a myriad of selves, none of which is allowed to dominate. However, Graham warns against 'a liberalism which seems to find cultural friction distasteful' (80), acknowledging that a post-colonial perspective should look beyond differences but not over-look them, incorporating difference into its model of national hybridity. In Cromwell, Kennelly does not shirk from highlighting the violence committed by both sides in Ireland's sectarian conflict and he certainly does not pretend that such palpable divisions can be easily overcome or even that they should be overcome. The move beyond these divisions involves acceptance rather than harmonisation. Secondly, Graham argues that the notion of the subaltern, in the work of Gramsci, the Indian Subaltern group and Spivak, mentioned above, 'criticises the post-colonial nation through its inability to liberate the 'peasant' or other subaltern groups' (81) and he argues that a post-colonial perspective must seek to avoid a masked repetition of colonial nomenclature and stereotyping. Much as Ngugi argues about 'the historical reality of the neo-colony' (82) in post-colonial Kenya, Graham writes that the failure of many post-colonial societies to recognise the legitimate rights and aspirations of subaltern groups, such as women, ethnic minorities, etc., forces post-colonial theory to question the validity of a national identity that is based on exclusion. Finally, Graham contends that post-colonialism must have a role to play in the production of a criticism that resists the imposition of monolithic cultural entities ie. the nation, and which 'always questions that apparent necessity' (83). Again the

importance of both TGH and C in the development of a critical post-colonial culture can be gauged by this assertion. In assessing the importance of the 'counter-tradition' in Irish literature, for example, Fintan O'Toole identifies two seminal texts, TGH and Flann O'Brien's 'satire on the absurdity of Gaelic nationalist rural pieties' (84), The Poor Mouth, which have succeeded in throwing light on the falsity of the image of the Irish nation favoured by both church and state. While successive governments have retained, in O'Toole's parlance, 'a notion of a real, true, Ireland of nature and landscape and sturdy peasantry', a transformation through the gradual influence of predominantly American cultural iconography has led to a contemporary rural reality in which 'the thatched cottage has become a hacienda with Spanish arches and Mexican walls, the three-legged stool has become the corner seat in the lounge bar and Pegeen Mike has become Sierra Sue, making the notion of a Gaelic peasantry merely laughable' (85). Liam de Paor makes a similar point: 'In a time, not of revolutionary, but of rapid and bewildering change, it is not a sense of identity which sustains the State but the State, for the moment, which sustains a sense of national identity' (86). The complexity of contemporary Irish identity is explored in Cromwell and a strong resistance towards a dominant cultural discourse acts as a form of liberation for both Buffun and the poet. As Richard Kearney has noted about Cromwell 'by passing through the psychic purgatory of self-analysis, Kennelly is finally in a position to explore a utopian dimension of myth which points beyond the ruins of the past', and thus the poet is 'liberated into a positive ignorance, free to

connect with foreclosed dimensions of being' (87). It is these 'foreclosed dimensions of being' that post-colonial theory must focus most clearly upon because it is precisely in these centres of dislocation that a move beyond the limits of ideologies and hegemonic constrictions becomes feasible. Indeed, Colin Graham argues that 'post-colonialism is, after all, partly about the recovery of hidden culture and structures of dissent' (88) and therefore both TGH and Cromwell are crucial exploratory texts in such an attempted recovery because, for example, although the peasant was a central cultural icon in the Free State, Kavanagh's poem recovered a more realistic, recognisable and tangible reality of peasant existence, a counteraction all the more important for its uniqueness.

An interesting and challenging perspective on the applicability of post-colonial theory to the Irish situation has been offered by Luke Gibbons in his book Transformations in Irish Culture. While acknowledging the influence of 'post-colonial strands of cultural mixing', Gibbons warns against a blanket reconstitution of a violent and oppositional past by 'the free play of hybridity and cultural mixing'. He notes 'the risks inherent in uncritical adulations of 'hybridity' as an empowering strategy for diasporic or post-colonial identity' (89), hinting at the depth and variety of social, cultural and emotional responses to the colonial era that are perhaps ignored in the quest for an over-hasty recognition of a national hybridity. He appears understandably wary of a post-colonial terminology which would seek to erase differences and advocates the importance of 'attending to those

recalcitrant areas of experience which simply do not lend themselves to certainty' (90). These are, of course, important considerations in the examination of the currency of post-colonial theory in Ireland and this thesis argues that it is precisely in these 'recalcitrant' areas, in the recovery of hidden culture, that post-colonial theory, as outlined above, can find its fullest expression and most potent cultural criticism. Both TGH and Cromwell highlight the fact that Irish identity cannot be fixed on racial, social or cultural grounds and is, in reality, as Gibbons claims, 'open-ended and heterogeneous', an idea that tallies with Declan Kiberd's assertion that 'no one element should subordinate or assimilate the others' (91) in the Irish post-colonial cultural context. Kennelly's Cromwell, in particular, examines the concept of Irish hybridity through the confused and tormented personality of Buffun who concludes, in the penultimate poem, that 'When I consider what all this has made of me, I marvel at the catalogue' (C,159). Buffun is the locus of the hybrid Irishman, harbouring a variety of identities but assimilating none, simultaneously capable of extreme violence and genuine love for his fellow human beings, an apparent contradiction that suggests that the notion of hybridity does not evoke a concept of cultural uniformity or adaptation, but rather the more humble and achievable state of an often uneasy co-existence of conflictual identities. Gibbons argues persuasively that 'undue haste in deconstructing essentialist notions of identity should not obscure the problematic agency of "post-colonial hybridity"' (92). This accommodation can only be arrived at, however, when the variety of national identities is exposed

to critical attention which represents a crucial function of texts such as Kavanagh's TGH. Gibbons notes the conflict of identity that can be a strong feature of Irish post-colonial literature and identity:

'There was no need to go abroad to experience the 'multiple identities' of the diaspora valorized in post-colonial theory: the uncanny experience of being a stranger to oneself was already a feature of life back home' (93).

Declan Kiberd, in his eclectic analysis of Irish literature entitled Inventing Ireland, traces the emergence of post-colonial Irish writing back as early as the 16th century when he claims that 'postcolonial writing, in a strict sense, began in Ireland when an artist like Seathrun Ceitinn took pen in hand to rebut the occupier's claims. He had been reading those texts which misrepresented him, and he resolved to write back' (94). Again, it is the note of resistance to dominant perceptions of national identities which appears to characterise the Irish post-colonial writer, whether the dominant perception is indigenous or foreign, colonial or post-colonial. Kiberd traces a line from Ceitinn through Edmund Burke to Oscar Wilde (95), illustrating writers who sought to dismantle England's 'imperial mythology from within its own structures' (96). However, the resistance to a romanticised, pastoral and nostalgic view of Irish rural life found its most strident and effective expression, according to Kiberd, in texts such as J.M Synge's The Playboy of the Western World, first performed in Dublin in 1907, and Kavanagh's TGH,

texts which challenged the 'wholly urban creation' of rural Ireland 'by artists like W.B Yeats and George Russell and by political thinkers such as Eamon de Valera and Michael Collins' (97). Kiberd writes that 'like Patrick Kavanagh's The Great Hunger thirty-five years later, The Playboy was an uncompromising exercise in anti-pastoral, offered at a period when some nationalists in Dublin were concocting a highly conservative version of pastoral: the timeless Irish peasant noted for his stoicism and Christian piety' (98). Because the latter creation formed the basis of the political philosophies of the early decades of the Free State, the crucial role of TGH in articulating a new voice of realism becomes clear. Kiberd notes that 'every repressive regime, having fully crushed its victims, can then afford to sentimentalise them as literary material' (99), a literary process that is replicated in the post colonial era but with a different audience in mind. In post-colonial Ireland, Kiberd states that 'that manoeuvre was now internalised and the emerging Irish middle class installed the landless peasant, the superannuated aristocrat and the urban poor as the bearers of an updated mythology. The notion of a timeless peasantry, like the dream of an ahistoric nobility was a fantasy purveyed by the new elites who had seized the positions of power in cities and towns' (100). This neo-colonialism closely tallies with Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's condemnation of neo-colonial African leaders' desire to 'capitulate to imperialism', a process in which, he claims, 'they are actually begging for a recolonisation of their countries with themselves as the neo-colonial governors living in modern fortresses' (101). David Lloyd has appositely

summarised the Irish neo-colonial dilemma and again it must be noted that the similarities with Ngugi's Kenyan model of neo-colonialism are striking:

'One of the earliest post-colonial nations, Ireland has largely conformed to the model of bourgeois nationalism that Frantz Fanon analysed in The Wretched of the Earth. The adoption, virtually wholesale, of the state institutions of the colonising power, and conformity to its models of representative democracy, poses what Fanon terms the 'sterile' formations of bourgeois politics against the popular movements its institutions are designed to contain. The state, which represents the point of intersection of the nation with the unilaterally defined universality of the world economic order, becomes an effective brake on the decolonising process culturally as well as economically' (102).

There are, of course, those who are critical of the applicability of post-colonial models to the Irish situation. In an essay entitled 'Modern Ireland - Post-Colonial Society or Post-Colonial Pretensions' (103), Liam Kennedy berates what he perceives as the 'exploitation of loose images and metaphors' on 'the marshy ground of speculation' in the usage of the term 'post-colonial' in an Irish context. He argues that post-colonial theory in Ireland is obsessed with 'the time worn and almost exclusive preoccupation with comparisons with Britain' (104) and that 'the traditional preoccupation with "England", as the never-failing source of all Irish ills, can be given an enhanced shelflife through the medium of the post-colonial additive'. What Kennedy

fails to analyse, however, is the potential freedom offered by post-colonial theorists such as Homi K. Bhaba and through his identification of the significance of national counter-narratives that seek to disrupt the 'traditional preoccupations' with the colonial power. In fact, due to its very ability to be fluid and flexible in its positioning vis-a-vis colonialism, certain elements of post-colonial theory, described above, provide a valuable and critical correlative to over-arching and stifling theories of nationhood and identity, theories that begin to erode under the influence of texts such as TGH and Cromwell. This thesis will argue that what should concern post-colonial theory is the internal national structures, of whatever origin, that stifle the emergence of a reflective, self-critical and ideologically resistant national culture.

4. Conclusion: A Post-Colonial Positioning.

Five months before his death on January 28, 1939, W.B Yeats wrote a poem entitled 'Under Ben Bulbin', a reference to the mountain close to where he was to be buried in Drumcliff, Co. Sligo. In the poem he exhorts future Irish poets to:

'Learn your trade,
Sing whatever is well made,
Scorn the sort now growing up,
All out of shape from toe to top.
Their unremembering hearts and heads
base-born products of base beds.

Sing the peasantry, and then
 Hard-riding country gentlemen,
 The holiness of monks, and after
 Porter-drinkers randy laughter;
 Sing the lords and ladies gay
 That were beaten into the clay
 Through seven heroic centuries;
 Cast your mind on other days
 That we in coming days may be
 Still the indomitable Irishry' (105)

Central to Yeats' message is the idea of looking to aspects of the past to legitimise and secure contemporary perceptions of the Irish nation. The colonial era is depicted as 'seven heroic centuries' and Yeats posits the idea that in the past there is a definition of nationhood and identity that will form future 'indomitable' models of Irish national identity. His perception of social stratification, with the peasants, the landed gentry and the clergy somewhat idealistically painted into a classical Anglo-Irish portrait, and the Anglo-Irish ascendancy firmly at the centre of the 'seven heroic centuries', takes little account of the 'dismal facts of emigration, economic stagnation, individual inhibition and lack of fulfilling opportunity' (106) which Terence Brown identifies as typical experiences for the majority of Irish people in the 1930's. In an ironic poetic reply entitled 'Irish Poets Open Your Eyes (After Yeats)', published in 1950, Kavanagh gave his own advice to Irish poets in which a cultural observation and realism replaces Yeats' romantic

idealism:

'Irish poets open your eyes,
Even Cabra can surprise;
Try the dog tracks now and then-
Shelbourne park and crooked men' (107).

This humorous and ironic focusing on the local and tangible indicates a genuine shift in emphasis in Irish literature in the 1930's and 40's that slowly began to take account of these 'dismal facts', echoing James Joyce's observation, in 1907, that 'ancient Ireland is dead... and today other bards, animated by other ideals, have their cry' (108). Kavanagh's importance, in Richard Kearney's words, as one of the writers 'who stayed at home and resolved to undermine the revivalist movement from within' (109) was to create, in TGH, a text which undermined crucial cultural icons of the Free State. Kearney argues that Kavanagh's work 'cultivated wit, iconoclasm and a deliberate estrangement from accredited wisdoms', and that along with Flann O'Brien he 'served as a middle generation cutting through the lush vegetation of tradition to clear spaces where new voices might be heard' (110). The importance of TGH is gauged by Terence Brown when he writes that 'this bleak, uncompromising report from the heart of rural Ireland uncovers no hint of the idyllic: rather it reveals how emotional and sexual poverty are the inevitable concomitants of grinding economic deprivation' (111), a comment that signals a significant shift away from the idyllic portrayal of rural Ireland that sustained popular models of Irish

identity. TGH gives a voice to the Irish subaltern through an individual untouched by the grand schemes of cultural and social change and highlights the existence of a huge class in Irish society that experienced anonymity in both the colonial and post-colonial eras. Maguire is one of the first significant characters in post-colonial Irish literature to debunk the myths that helped sustain the anti-colonial hegemony of racial purity and separateness. What Kavanagh rejected was the myth making of the Revivalists, what he referred to as 'the unworkable one' (112).

Essentially, in placing both TGH and Cromwell at important formative junctures in a genuinely post-colonial de-colonising Irish literary framework, it is in the structure of an historically contextualised positioning in which Kavanagh and Kennelly seek merely to articulate a voice at a particular moment in its existence. Kavanagh's position in relation to the 'nation', visualised in TGH, is not a fixed ideological stance but rather an implied criticism of a moribund and hypocritical society. Kennelly's Buffon similarly eschews an intrinsic connection with the over-arching concepts of the nation and nationalism but he explores the contradictory liminal edges of concepts of personal and national identity in pursuit of a liberation from the confines of a rigid and definable history. Stuart Hall has appositely described the ground upon which the texts rest:

'It (the past) is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth. Cultural identities are the points of

identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence, but a positioning` (113).

INTRODUCTION - ENDNOTES

1. ed. L. Chrisman and P. Williams, Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p.5.
2. Terence Brown, Ireland - A Social and Cultural History 1922-79 (London: Fontana, 1981), p.14.
3. Ibid., p.18.
4. See chapter one, 'The Language of African Literature' in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's Decolonising the Mind (London: James Curry, 1986), pp. 4-34.
5. Chrisman, p.12.
6. See 'Economic Growth and Development, 1943-70' by Brendan M. Walsh in ed. Joe Lee, Ireland 1945-70 (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1979), pp.27-38, and Part Three, section four, pp.599-635, entitled 'The Quest for Prosperity' in F.S.L. Lyons' Ireland Since the Famine (London: Fontana, 1971).
7. Tim Pat Coogan, De Valera (London: Hutchinson, 1993), p.693.
8. In the period 1951-56, for example, net emigration reached 13.4 per 1,000 of population [from David O'Mahony's The Irish Economy (Cork: Cork University Press, 1964), p.4], and O'Mahony concludes that 'net emigration has more than exceeded the natural increase for every intercensal period since 1871 except for the period 1946-51'. Compare these statistics with de Valera's assertion in 1943 that 'the restoration of the unity of the national territory and the restoration of the language are the greatest of our uncompleted national tasks (from The Field Day Anthology, (Derry: Field day Publications, 1991) Vol.3, p.749).
9. ed. Seamus Deane, The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing (Derry: Field day, 1991), p.89.
10. For an interesting account of the counter-revival movement, see 'The Counter Revival - Provincialism and Censorship 1930-65' in The Field Day Anthology, Vol.3, pp.89-93.
11. Ibid., p.92.
12. ed. Homi K. Bhabha, Nation and Narration (London: Routledge, 1990), p.300.
13. Ibid., p.300.
14. Ibid., p.297.
15. Ibid., p.303.
16. Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (London: Penguin, 1967), p.183.

17. Bhabha, p.303.
18. Peter Kavanagh, November Haggard (New York: The Peter Kavanagh Hand Press, 1971), p.15.
19. Bhabha, p.4.
20. The Irish Review, No.16, Autumn/Winter (1994), pp.29-43.
21. Graham writes (The Irish Review, p.30): 'Firstly, post-colonial criticism evolves as an ethical criticism. It is diagnostic of a political and historical situation, in that it also identifies who is the coloniser and who is the colonised - but it also morally evaluates this colonial relationship as one in which a wrong is done to the colonised, whose integrity, space and identity is taken over and controlled against his/her will. This ethical consideration has caused problems which have been sadly unexamined as post-colonial criticism has evolved new ways of thinking on other subjects, and it is a problem particularly relevant to a discussion aimed at rethinking post-coloniality in a contemporary Irish context'.
22. Tom Inglis [Moral monopoly - The Catholic Church in Modern Irish Society (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987)], p.75, provides a very illuminating 'list of occasions when there was a direct input from one or more bishops' into government legislation and the list indicates how extraordinarily pervasive was the influence of the Catholic Church on social legislation in Ireland:

 'Censorship of Films Act 1923
 Censorship of Publications Act 1929
 Legitimacy Act 1930
 Vocational Education Act 1930
 The Constitution of Ireland 1937
 Public Health Bill 1945
 Health Act 1947
 Intoxicating Liquor (Amendment) Bill 1948
 Adoption Act 1952
 Vital Statistics and registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths Act 1952
 Health Act 1953
 Agriculture Act 1958
 Intoxicating Liquor Act 1960
 Charities Act 1961
 Adoption Act 1961
 Succession Act 1965'.
23. J.M. Synge, The Aran Islands (London: Penguin 1972 p.xliii.
24. Frank O'Connor, 'The Future of Irish Literature', in Horizon January, (1942), p.59.
25. O'Connor, p.59.

26. Colin Graham, 'Post-Nationalism/ Post-Colonialism: Reading Irish Culture' in the Irish Studies Review (Autumn, 1994), No.8., p.37.

27. Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.1-2.

28. David Lloyd, Anomalous States - Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Movement (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1993), p.4.

29. Bhabha addresses the complexities involved in the nomenclature of the colonial moment when he writes (Nation and Narration, pp. 296-7:

'Both gentleman and slave, with different cultural means and to very different historical ends, demonstrate that forces of social authority and subalternity may emerge in displaced, even decentred, strategies of signification. This does not prevent them from being representative in a political sense, although it does suggest that positions of authority are themselves part of a process of ambivalent identification. Indeed, the exercise of power may be both more politically effective and physically affective because their discursive liminality may provide greater scope for strategic manoeuvre and negotiation. It is precisely in reading between these borderlines of the nation space that we can see how the 'people' come to be constructed within a range of discourses as a double narrative movement'.

30. Taken from 'What is Post(-)Colonialism' by Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge in ed. Chrisman, pp.276-91, p.276.

31. Footnoted in above text, p.228.

32. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, The Empire Writes Back (London: Routledge, 1989), p.33.

33. Ibid., p.36.

34. Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), p.270.

35. Ibid., p.270.

36. Said's three examples are as follows:

i. 'Wherever they went Europeans immediately began to change the local habitat; their conscious aim was to transform territories into what they had left behind' (Culture and Imperialism, p.271).

ii. 'A second example is the rationalising projects of long-standing territorial possession, which seek routinely to make land profitable and at the same time to integrate it with an external rule' (p.272).

iii. 'A third example- colonial space must be transformed sufficiently so as to no longer appear foreign to the imperial

eye' (p.273).

37. Ibid., p.273.

38. Like Gibbons, Transformations in Irish Culture (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), pp. 174-5.

39. Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities (London: Verso, 1983), p.9.

40. Ibid., p.9.

41. Ibid., p.7.

42. ed. P. Fallon and D. Mahon, The Penguin Book of Contemporary Irish Poetry (Dublin: Penguin, 1991), p.xviii.

43. Antoinette Quinn, Patrick Kavanagh - Born-Again Romantic (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1991), p.157.

44. Peter Kavanagh, Patrick Kavanagh - Man and Poet (Newbridge: Goldsmith Press, 1987), p.292.

45. Ibid., p.383.

46. From a taped interview, 6-1-95.

47. Private correspondence, no date on letter, c. Spring. 1996.

48. Private correspondence, Spring, 1994.

49. Private correspondence, March 3, 1996.

50. Anderson, p.7.

51. Michael O'Loughlin, After Kavanagh (Dublin: Raven Arts Press, 1985), p.38.

52. ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), p.52.

53. See p.25 of O'Mahony's The Irish Economy.

54. ed. Maurice Moynihan, Speeches and Statements by Eamon de Valera 1917-73 (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1980), p.466.

55. Deane, Vol.3, p.747.

56. Patrick Kavanagh, Collected Pruse (London: Martin Brian and O'Keefe, 1973), p.14.

57. Edited by Ranajit Guha, Subaltern Studies, 7 vols. to date, published by the Oxford University Press in Delhi, India, the journal of Subaltern Studies provides an umbrella for a variety of academics and commentators to explore aspects of India's

colonial and post-colonial identity. Colin Graham explores the work of the Subaltern Studies group in an interesting article entitled 'Subalternity and Gender: Problems of post-colonial Irishness' in Journal of Gender Studies, Vol.5, No.3 (1996), pp.363-373.

58. Colin Graham, Journal for Gender Studies, p.365.

59. Patrick Kavanagh, Collected Poems (Newbridge: Goldsmith Press, 1972), p.80. Henceforth, reference will be made to the line number of this version of the poem.

60. Hoare and Smith, p.51.

61. Graham, Journal for Gender Studies, p.365.

62. Brown, p.187.

63. Ibid., p.187.

64. Private correspondence, 3/3/97.

65. See p.292 of Bhabha's Nation and Narration.

66. Ibid., p.292.

67. Brendan Kennelly, The Book of Judas (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1991), p.9.

68. Ibid., p.9.

69. Bhabha, Nation and Narration, p.303.

70. Ibid., p.303.

71. O'Loughlin, p.27.

72. Patrick Kavanagh, Collected Prose, p.22.

73. Chrisman, p.289.

74. Lloyd, p.13.

75. Ibid., p.35.

76. Ibid., p.54.

77. Ibid., p.54

78. Private correspondence, 3/3/97.

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid.

82. Ngugi, p.78
83. Private correspondence, 3/3/97.
84. eds. Mark Patrick Hederman and Richard Kearney, The Crane Bag Book of Irish Studies - Volume Two (1982-85) (Dublin: Folens, 1987), p.116.
85. Ibid., p.115.
86. eds. Mark Patrick Hederman and Richard Kearney, The Crane Bag Book of Irish Studies (1977-81), p.361.
87. Richard Kearney, Postnationalist Ireland : Politics, Culture and Philosophy (London: Routledge, 1997), p.140.
88. Private correspondence, 3-3-97.
89. Gibbons, p.176.
90. Ibid., p.18.
91. Declan Kiberd, Inventing Ireland (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), p.653.
92. Gibbons, p.176.
93. Ibid., p.176.
94. Kiberd, p.13.
95. See chapters entitled 'Ireland - England's Unconscious' (pp.29-32) and 'Oscar Wilde - The Artist as Irishman' (pp.33-50) of Kiberd's Inventing Ireland.
96. Ibid., p.32.
97. Ibid., p.481.
98. Ibid., p.481.
99. Ibid., p.483.
100. Ibid., p.483.
101. Ngugi, p.80.
102. Lloyd, p.7.
103. The Irish Review, No.13 (Winter 1992), pp.107-121.
104. Ibid., p.119.
105. W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1989), p.451.

106. Brown, p.154.
107. Patrick Kavanagh, Collected Poems, p.236.
108. Taken from 'La Cometa Dell "Home Rule"' in Il Piccolo della Sera (Trieste, xxxiv, December 22, 1910). Text in Italian. Not reprinted, from A Bibliography of James Joyce (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1953) by John J. Slocum, p.94. Partially available in The Field Day Anthology, Vol.3, pp.7-10.
109. Kearney, p.124.
110. Ibid., p.126.
111. Brown, p.187.
112. Patrick Kavanagh, Collected Pruse, p.271.
113. Chrisman, p.395.

CHAPTER ONE

KINGDOM OR COLONY?

By definition, the term 'post-colonial' presupposes two important elements in a country's history. Firstly, that the country in question was indeed a colony and secondly that this colonial era is now past. In relation to Irish history, it is important to consider whether the processes and consequences of foreign invasions and settlements, a feature of Irish life from at least as early as 200 B.C. (1), were the foundations of a recognisably colonial structure or merely a series of loosely connected military attacks that were quickly assimilated into the existing native culture. This cycle of invasion and assimilation has given Ireland a complex, diverse, and often contradictory, political and social history that makes even generic statements concerning national identity all the more difficult. This chapter will briefly explore the complex nature of the colonial experience in Ireland and will examine the conditions from which a recognisable post-colonial literature could emerge. Drawing on the ideas of Edward Said, Benedict Anderson, Roy Foster and F.S.L. Lyons amongst others, this chapter will examine the contradictions inherent in attempted definitions of national identity that seek to deny the essentially intricate nature of a hybrid and inter-related national authenticity. In the specifically Irish context, the nativist reaction to the granting of independence in 1922 will be closely examined to further contextualise TGH, while the counter-revival reaction to the nativist doctrine will also be explored. The latter should provide the immediate context out of

which TGH was written.

1.1 'Blitzophrenia': The Crisis of Irish Identity.

When utilising the term 'colony' in relation to a particular country or society the impression created, by standard interpretations of the word (2), is that of a majority indigenous people being governed by a minority of non-indigenous invaders who seek to impose military and economic control over the previously self-governing territory of the majority. The obvious military and economic exploits of the invaders are supplemented by powerful ideological concepts, such as the propagation of the notion of the inferior nature of the indigenous people's language and cultural heritage. Edward Said defines the term 'colonialism' as 'the implanting of settlements on distant territories' (3), a definition that certainly points to Ireland's complex and often contradictory colonial identity primarily as a result of the country's proximity to the colonial centre. The difficulties with Said's definition arise when the word 'distant' is applied to the Irish context. For some post-colonial critics, as discussed in the introductory chapter (4), this physical closeness questions the very essence of what David Lloyd refers to as 'Ireland's putatively 'post-colonial' culture' (5). Indeed, Ireland's very nearness to the colonial hub sets up the problem of the acceptability of colonial nomenclature in the Irish context and, interestingly, begins to call Said's definition of colonialism into question. He appears to preclude non-distant territories from the experience of colonialism without defining the

parameters of what could be gauged as an acceptable distance from the colonial centre. Indeed, the experience of colonialism, it could be argued, is proportionately intensified by the relative proximity of colonised societies to the colonial pivot. These problems of colonial authenticity would appear to focus on the following significant areas: the depth of assimilation of Irish culture into a larger British model of identity; the perception, common today, of the Irish being not so quantifiably foreign as other colonial ethnic groups; the consequent treatment of Irish independence movements as largely the actions of ungrateful subjects rather than as legitimate anti-colonial resistance; the relative ease of economic control due to the proximity of large economic workplaces in Britain. All of these factors influence the intricate colonial interdependence between Ireland and Britain and underline the importance of establishing viable parameters within which a relative positioning can occur vis-a-vis Ireland's complicated colonial identity, and this will be one of the central aims of this chapter.

Similarly, identifying the precise historical moment of originary colonisation is a difficult and contentious process but nonetheless crucial in the understanding of the creation and maintenance of nationalist mythologies. For example, the expansion of Mesolithic farmers from Scandinavia through Scotland and into the north of Ireland was well under way by 6,000 B.C. and excavations at Lough Gur in Co. Limerick point to a relatively sophisticated Stone Age farming society, descendants of the earlier settlers, in existence by 3,000 B.C. (6). These

early arrivals in Ireland would traditionally be regarded as settlers rather than colonisers because of the sparse and fragmented nature of the society into which they came. However, a flint flake excavated near Drogheda in 1972 (7) provides faint traces of the existence of modern homo-sapiens in Ireland as early as 40,000 B.C. While the Mesolithic farmers are traditionally regarded as the first settlers in Ireland (8), the traces of earlier human settlements would suggest that the land they cultivated could well have been utilised by the hunter/gatherers of the Palaeolithic era. Therefore, it could justifiably be argued that Ireland was first colonised, in the loosest sense, as early as 6,000 B.C., a view that contrasts sharply with Yeats' 'seven heroic centuries' (9) of Irish anti-colonial resistance or de Valera's assertion that Ireland 'stood alone for several hundred years against aggression' (10). Traditional Irish nationalist histories clearly echoed the sentiments of W.E.H. Lecky when he noted that 'for seven hundred years England has ruled over a nation and she has left it one of the poorest and most wretched on earth' (11), clearly dating the historical genesis of colonisation to the Anglo-Norman invasion of 1169. Similarly, Edmund Curtis utilises the term 'colony' to describe Ireland at the time of the death of King John in 1216 (12) and it is perhaps this moment that both Yeats and de Valera appear to favour as the beginning of Ireland's colonial experience, regardless of the complex series of previous settlements. This search for an authentic originary moment of colonisation highlights the complexities involved in any attempted definition or delineation of such an historically

intricate and often incomplete process as colonisation. Perhaps one of the most useful consequences of the application of post-colonial theory in the Irish context results from focusing on the difficulty over a fixed point of originary colonialism which subsequently challenges other assumptions over the nature and consequences of the colonial experience.

Another inherent difficulty in any examination of the process of colonisation is the accurate identification and classification of the indigenous people. The latter are most likely themselves composed of the social and cultural legacies of previous invaders and settlers who have assimilated into the indigenous culture over differing periods of time and consequently the identification of a national authenticity becomes increasingly ideological and contentious. In Ireland the Anglo-Norman invasion of 1169 and the visit of King Henry II in 1171 are often cited as the beginning of the recognisable colonial activities of British settlers, what Robert Kee refers to as 'the beginning of London's claim to concern itself with Ireland' (13). These settlers, however, assimilated to a considerable degree through inter-marriage and eventually they formed the majority opposition to the more systematic and identifiable colonial activities of British settlers in Ireland in the early 17th century. The Norman families of de Courcy, de Burgo and others, with the Butler Earldom of Ormond and the Fitzgerald Earldoms of Desmond and Kildare (14), established themselves into the tribal Irish society which was dominated by regionally powerful clans, such as the MacCarthys in the south-west, the O'Connors in the west

and the O'Neills in the north. While ultimate authority in Ireland nominally resided with the English monarchy these clans effectively governed the country, thus further questioning the nature of the colonial experience in Ireland. It was a government of regions, however, and it was not until the intercession of Henry VIII in 1534 that Ireland was governed more effectively by the English crown (15). Although the Tudor period heralded a more tangible and easily recognisable authoritarian colonialism in Ireland, Roy Foster notes of that era:

'Nothing began, or ended, thus neatly: the English colonial presence in Ireland remained superimposed upon an ancient identity, alien and bizarre. Even as the tensions of early modern Europe manifested themselves throughout the island, the incompleteness of conquest remained the salient truth'. (16)

The significance of the Tudor conquest and colonisation of Ireland lies in the foundations that it laid for the emergence of the 'Protestant Ascendancy' as a major, often dominant, force in Irish social, political, religious and cultural life. At the battle of Kinsale in 1601 Hugh O'Neill, one of the last powerful 'Old Irish' chiefs (ie. his ancestry had, by and large, resisted the Norman influx of the 12th century) and over 4,000 Spanish soldiers were defeated by an English army under Lord Mountjoy. Six years later in 1607 O'Neill led what was known as 'The Flight of the Earls' from Ireland, an event that decimated the influence of the old Celtic clans (17). This left James I free to introduce English common law into Ireland and to begin the plantation of

Ulster in 1609. The old Irish clans were, by the end of the reign of Elizabeth 1 in 1603, largely excluded from the power structures of the following centuries (18) and it was not until Daniel O'Connell's (1775-1847) mass agitation movements of the early nineteenth century that this group significantly influenced the course of events in Ireland. Similarly, by the early 1700's the proportion of the population of Ireland of Scots and English descent had risen to 27% from as little as 2% in 1600 (19). One of the most important outcomes of the early decades of the seventeenth century, therefore, was the establishment of a land-owning settler group of differing cultural, religious and social backgrounds to the native Irish. Aidan Clarke notes:

'The history of Ireland in the first half of the seventeenth century was rich in event, and perhaps bewildering in the number and complexity of the interests involved. The Irish, the old English, the new English, the royalists, the parliamentarians, and the Scots - each of them played their separate parts in the confusion of events. But what happened at that time can be summarised in a single brief sentence. The land of Ireland changed hands' (20).

One of the pillars of any colonial regime, and indeed one of the recognisable features of a colonised country, is the appropriation of the land of the indigenous people. If land is taken from people, in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's words, by 'conquest, unequal treaties or the genocide of part of the population' (21) then the era of colonial appropriation of that land can be

accepted as having begun. The plantation of English and Scottish settlers in Ulster was well under way by 1610 and in the following decades, particularly after the Cromwellian land confiscations in 1652-3 and the Williamite land confiscations of 1691-1703, large tracts of Irish land lay in the hands of settlers from Britain. The Act of Settlement of 1652, for example, declared certain landowners 'delinquent' on spurious charges of anti-British activity and they were banished, on pain of death, to the west of the Shannon river (22). By the end of the 17th century, therefore, there was a clear division between the coloniser and the colonised, the former being in possession of the land and the latter becoming, in the colonial order, the dispossessed. The 18th century therefore witnessed the inexorable rise of the new settlers and the expansion of the economic, social and political gap between the colonisers and the colonised. J.C. Beckett notes of the Cromwellian settlements:

'In town and country alike, the protestant interest that had been growing since the latter half of Elizabeth's reign had now established complete ascendancy; and this ascendancy, surviving both Restoration and Revolution, was to control the life of Ireland down to the nineteenth century' (23).

The consequent effects of this process of land colonisation on the self-perception of various groups in Ireland is harder to quantify than the physical consequences of the confiscations. Many of the more salient points were raised in the differing interpretations of these consequences by two leading Irish

historians, the late F.S.L. Lyons and Roy Foster. In a lecture delivered at Oxford University in 1978, Lyons analysed the uneasy and complex relationship that existed between the minority Protestant Anglo-Irish descendants of the Elizabethan and Cromwellian settlers and the majority Catholic descendants of the Old Irish clans. While tracing the influence of Britain on Irish affairs, particularly after the Act of Union in 1801, Lyons's thesis is that, by the end of the nineteenth century, the Anglican and Presbyterian Anglo-Irish tradition and the Catholic nationalist tradition were 'strikingly incompatible' and that a 'competitive co-existence' (24) characterised their relationship. He argued that the failure of the Celtic Twilight movement's attempt at cultural unity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was based on the false assumption that 'cultural fusion and regeneration were the agreed objectives of a society which had laid aside its political differences' (25). Far from Ireland achieving a fusion of differing traditions 'the great interest of the first decade of the new century is to see how fusion was first resisted, and then destroyed, by hostile forces' (26). Lyons argues that despite the obvious success of the British colonial regime in Ireland the net result was a clash of opposites. The Anglo-Irish tradition and the Catholic nationalist tradition simply had different social, economic and political aspirations and no amount of grand intellectual debate or any form of social engineering could ever unite these traditions, despite their historical and contemporary proximity. Colonial Ireland was composed of rival and fractious traditions which co-existed but never really integrated. The difference

between the Elizabethan 'New English' settlers and the 'Old English' settlers of the twelfth century was that the earlier settlers intermarried into the indigenous culture they found at the time of their conquest. Indeed, the leader of the Norman conquest in Ireland in 1169, Richard FitzGilbert de Clare, made marriage to Aoife, the daughter of the King of Leinster, a prerequisite for participation in the conquest (27). While this could easily be regarded as a purely political step it highlights the differing approaches to conquest and colonisation between the Old and the New English with the former regarding integration as a vital element in the process of settlement, while the latter relied more upon military strength, economic power and the statute books for their guiding principles.

Lyons's conclusion on the state of Ireland, from the last decades of the colonial era to the early decades of the Free State, is one in which the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised is one based on irreconcilably different perceptions of national identity:

'During the period from the fall of Parnell to the death of Yeats, it was not primarily an anarchy of violence in the streets, of contempt for law and order such as to make the island, or any part of it, permanently ungovernable. It was an anarchy in the mind and in the heart, an anarchy which forbade not just unity of territories, but also 'unity of being', an anarchy that sprang from the collision within a small and intimate island of seemingly irreconcilable cultures, unable to

live together or to live apart, caught inextricably in the web of their tragic history' (28).

This interpretation of Ireland's internal relationships would appear to exclude any form of cultural symbiosis between what Lyons identifies as the rival Anglo-Irish and Celtic Irish traditions. In his terms, therefore, Ireland would certainly fulfil elements of the colonial criteria of settlement as identified by Edward Said and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o. Consequently, the descendants of the seventeenth century settlers can be regarded as an alien culture, imposed upon and rejected by an indigenous culture with which it had little in common.

Roy Foster addressed Lyons's assertions in an essay entitled 'Varieties of Irishness - Cultures and Anarchy in Ireland' (29). Foster's contention is that the differing cultures in Ireland were not necessarily confrontational and in fact their mutual interests often overlapped in a variety of social, cultural and political organisations and movements. Foster argues that far from being polarised at opposite ends of a national identity, the two dominant cultures, what he refers to as the 'Irish-Gaelic identity' (30) and the 'Protestant Unionist' (both northern and southern) (31) tradition, co-existed in an environment in which both traditions contributed to a notion of cultural diversity. He states, for example, that one of the vital roots of the revived Irish-Celtic identity in the nineteenth century was the 'historiographical, antiquarian, archaeological and political activities of the Protestant Unionist minority in Ireland:

'They (Protestant Unionists) had their own psychological identification with Ireland, which was not threatened by an interest and a pride in the evidently ancient origins of Irish settlement and Irish culture' (32).

Foster's contention is that the two cultures co-existed on a variety of levels, possibly due to the centuries of interaction between them. He argues for inclusive rather than exclusive definitions of nationalism, a point that is equally relevant to the post-colonial era in Ireland. Rather than the 'bleak pessimism' (33) of Lyons's cultural division, Foster presents a notion of cultural diversity in which he attacks 'a presumption that assumes the pure milk of the separatist tradition is the only sustenance that can produce an Irish nationalist worthy of the name' (34). He portrays the nineteenth century as an era of cultural co-existence, despite the often violent nature of the opposition to British rule. Foster does not deny elements of division but he argues that these elements have been disproportionately considered relative to elements of diversity. His preference for 'the discovery of an outward-looking and inclusive cultural nationalism, not predicated upon political and religious differences' (35) is a central concept underpinning post-colonial perceptions of Irish identity. One of the key arguments in the essay is echoed in a quote from an editorial in The Leader newspaper, founded in 1900 by D.P. Moran, who expressed the view that an exclusive Irish identity could exist only if nationalists ceased looking over their shoulders at Britain and attempted 'to remain Irish in spite of her' (36). The

editorial remarked:

'Perhaps the greatest of all difficulties which underlie the whole of what is known as the Irish Revival is the length of time we are obliged to go back before we arrive at any mode of life that may with truth be termed distinctly Irish'. (37)

This is a crucial point when considering the nature of Ireland's colonial history. The Gaelic Revivalists looked to a period long before the arrival of the Norman or Elizabethan settlers as the time of the flowering of the essential Irish/Celtic spirit. For example, in The Wanderings of Oisín (1889), Yeats attempted to create, or rather re-create, a unifying mythology out of the pre-Christian Celtic stories and legends that could serve as the basis for a new and vibrant society. In this long poem he virtually dismisses the Christian legacy while St. Patrick, the representative of a sterile, passionless Christianity, is unfavourably compared to the legendary character of Oisín, who is symbolic of the fighting spirit and sensitive soul of the Gael, a true icon of 'Irish' identity (38). One of the consequences of this search for the 'pure' Irish race was the perception that anything remotely connected to the colonial settlers was necessarily alien to the indigenous culture which had its roots, according to Yeats, in 'the tumultuous and heroic Pagan cycle' (39) of the pre-Christian era. The republican movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries reiterated this perception of Ireland as an island irrevocably divided between two rival and contending cultures, conveniently ignoring

the frequent overlapping and exchange that was the reality of social, political and cultural life of the preceding centuries.

In his book Culture and Imperialism (1993), Edward Said articulates his idea of a 'shared memory'. A similar point is expressed in different terms by Foster, and an examination of this will throw interesting light on the debate over Ireland's colonial legacy. Said writes:

'Although that era (19th century imperialism) clearly had an identity all of its own, the meaning of the imperial past is not totally contained within it, but has entered the reality of hundreds of millions of people, where its existence as shared memory and as a highly conflictual texture of culture, ideology, and policy still exercises tremendous force' (40).

This is a crucial point in the consideration of the differing interpretations of Ireland's colonial legacy because Said defines the past as a 'shared memory' which, despite its conflictual nature, is nonetheless shared and therefore common to all traditions composing a particular national identity. His use of the word 'texture' in relation to identity appears to coincide with Foster's notion of a national hybridity and cultural diversity as it relates to Ireland's post-colonial identity. However, Said's notion of a shared memory raises a few pertinent questions. Who exactly shares this memory and is it not feasible that different social groups will have entirely different interpretations of 'the meaning of the imperial past'? Moreover,

how is this 'shared memory' to be assessed and quantified? Brendan Kennelly's Cromwell, for example, exemplifies the fractured and dissonant nature of one individual's confrontation with the 'shared memory' that suggests an inherent unity but begins to unravel under closer scrutiny. Said implies that the era of high imperialism which he identifies, namely the 19th century, continues to exert an influence on contemporary perceptions of national identity. It is interesting to note that it was during this specific period that Ireland was fully incorporated into the United Kingdom, through the Act of Union in 1801, and was technically no longer a colony of the empire but a constituent member of the colonial centre until the creation of the Free State in 1922. Therefore, the degree of acrimony over the interpretation of Ireland's colonial status could be directly related to the intensity of the union between the two countries and it is precisely this 121 year incorporation into the United Kingdom that poses so many questions over the nature of Ireland's colonial status. What must be remembered is that Ireland remained very much a colonial subject during its 19th century incorporation into the United Kingdom, a fact attested to by the almost complete inaction of the British government during the catastrophe of the Great Famine of 1845-51 (41). On the other hand, however, a huge contribution to the British military machine was made by Irish soldiers, with almost 150,000 enlisted by April, 1916, ironically the month of the Easter Rising (42). Again these are examples of how Ireland appears to be simultaneously an integral part of yet removed from the colonial centre, eschewing simplistic interpretations of its historical

relationship with its colonial neighbour .

In Culture and Imperialism Said certainly includes Ireland amongst the foremost of British colonial enterprises which represents quite a contrast to his earlier work, Orientalism, in which Ireland's colonial experience is virtually ignored. He comments:

'Thus India, North Africa, the Caribbean, Central and Southern America, and many parts of Africa, China and Japan, the pacific archipelago, Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, North America and of course Ireland belong in a group together, although most of the time they are treated separately' (43).

Said equates revolutionary activity and nationalism with a certain degree of social elitism, a notion that can be linked to elements of the Protestant nationalist tradition in Ireland. He notes:

'When it got people out on the streets to march against the white monster, nationalism was often led by lawyers, doctors, and writers who were partly formed and to some degree produced by the colonial power' (44).

This notion of a form of nationalism emerging directly out of the colonial experience and indeed defining itself in the coloniser's terms raises a key issue in the debate on Ireland's complex colonial identity. Opposition to the colonial regime in Ireland

and other countries often stemmed from groups not readily classified as the colonial 'other' but more recognisable as constituent elements of the colonial regime itself. These groups highlight the complexities of the colonial definition of identity in that they simultaneously appear to represent two rival traditions. Many of the key figures in Ireland's intricate relationship with Britain, from the openly revolutionary Robert Emmett (1778-1803) to the influential parliamentarian Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-91), belonged to a tradition that was popularly perceived as complicit with the colonial regime. The Anglo-Irish Protestant Ascendancy, for example, from whose ranks Wolfe Tone (1763-98) and Thomas Davis (1814-45) emerged, produced an articulate and effective resistance to the very colonial order to which it owed its privileged position. The exclusive labels of the Unionist and Nationalist causes were in fact intertwined in a complex social, political and cultural environment where the ultimate goal of some form of Irish independence appeared to be the common denominator. The cloth in which these aspirations were draped appeared to obscure the commonality that lay beneath. While the figures mentioned above are, arguably, in Roy Foster's words 'exceptions, not representative of a latent syndrome' (45) their role in the emergence and articulation of a form of Irish nationalism has significance in the fact that they discourage cosy definitions of a polarised national identity in favour of a broader, more complex composite national authenticity.

The depth and consequences of the absorption of Ireland into the British colonial experience is captured by Brendan Kennelly in

his long poem Cromwell. The protagonist, M.P.G.M Buffun, is haunted by 'a host of ghosts' (46), principal amongst them being Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658), an historical figure of almost unique and sustained revulsion in Ireland. Kennelly challenges this stereotype by giving Cromwell a voice and a platform from which he can attempt to explain himself and thus offer a rarely-sought insight into one of the most important figures in the establishment of colonial Ireland. Personified as a butcher, Cromwell speaks to Buffun:

'I would remind you, returned the butcher, that you invited me here. I am the guest of your imagination, therefore have the grace to hear me out; I am not altogether responsible for the fact that you were reared to hate and fear my name which in modesty I would suggest is not without its own ebullient music. I say further that you too are blind in your way, and now you use me to try to justify that blindness. By your own admission you are empty also. So you invited me to people your emptiness. This I will do without remorse or reward. But kindly remember that you are blind and that I see' (47).

Kennelly's Buffun personifies the degree to which Ireland's colonial past impinges upon any subjective contemporary perspective. Cromwell accuses Buffun of selectively using the past to justify his 'blindness', perhaps in a reference to the variety of difficulties faced by the post-colonial subject, paramount amongst which is the crisis created in the attempted

definition of both personal and national identities. Buffun's personality, manifested in his dreams and waking memory, is composed of layers of history, prejudice and fear. His imagination is a battleground where second-hand perceptions of history struggle for acceptance, where the colonial past becomes an easy scapegoat for contemporary problems. Buffun asks himself a telling question which points not only to the multiplicity of traditions that compose Kennelly's perception of national identity but to the difficulty in disentangling these traditions in order to arrive at a more balanced self-perception:

'Do I believe myself?

I spill my selves' (48).

In this couplet, from the penultimate poem in the collection, Kennelly comes closest to the essence, in as much as there is one, of the genuine post-colonial subject. Buffun acknowledges that he is composed of a variety of competing identities, what Kennelly humorously refers to as 'blitzophrenia' (49). Jonathan Allison describes Kennelly as having 'a faith in the poet as a monitor of vying and often contradictory impulses, as a locus of dialogue and conflict, and as a negatively capable articulator of uncertainty, rather than as the voice of faith and certainty' (50), a description that tallies closely with Roy Foster's assertion that a post-colonial perspective on national identity entails being 'unsure of your foundations' (51). Perhaps the key to Kennelly's and indeed any valid post-colonial perspective is the willingness to listen to and engage with the voice of the

colonial other, however disruptive and unsettling such a process might be.

1.2. The Nativist Reaction.

Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries many nationalists adopted what could be termed a nativist position as the most effective means to achieve their ultimate goal of Irish independence, nativism being defined 'at its most basic and contentious, as the belief in an authentic ethnic identity, as in the Negritude movement, or the desire to return, after the catastrophe of colonialism, to an unsullied indigenous cultural tradition, as in various forms of cultural nationalism' (52). Douglas Hyde's (1860-1947) lecture of November, 1892, on 'The Necessity of De-Anglicising the Irish People' is often cited as the quintessential example of the Irish nativist position and it expresses a view of nationhood that seeks to entirely reappraise and reevaluate the consequences of colonial history. Hyde states:

'We must strive to cultivate everything that is most racial, most smacking of the soil, most Gaelic, most Irish, because in spite of the little admixture of Saxon blood in the north-east corner, this island is and will ever remain Celtic at the core' (53).

Hyde's argument was, as Roy Foster puts it, 'a vital statement' (54) and echoes of his arguments are to be found in the writings of important contemporaneous figures, including Lady Augusta Gregory (1852-1932) and particularly in the writings of Daniel

Corkery (1878-1964) (55). W.B. Yeats (1865-1939), for example, writing on Nationality and Literature in 1893 comments:

'Our poetry is still a poetry of the people in the main, for it deals with great National events. The little foreign criticism of Irish literature which I have seen speaks of it as simple and primitive. They are right. There is a distinct school of Irish literature, which we must foster and protect, and its foundation is sunk in the legend lore of the people and in the National history' (56).

These ideas were further developed and indeed embellished by Yeats' close friend, Lionel Johnson (1867-1902), in 1894:

'In the poetry of that great generation (Young Ireland movement) lies beauty, all beauty, and nothing but beauty! Against any living Irish poet who writes in any style uncultivated then, is brought the dreadful charge of being artistic: and sometimes, if it be a very flagrant case, the unspeakable accusation of being English' (57).

Even if Johnson's final assertion appears a little duplicitous and a classic example of nativist myopia, these three significant and opinion-forming historical figures point to a nativism that sought to place a quasi-mythical Celtic Irish past at the centre of a new movement away from what many of the Anglo-Irish persuasion would have viewed with suspicion, namely Catholic republicanism, typified by organisations such as Sinn Fein and

the para-military Irish Republican Brotherhood. In many ways the nativist movement, loosely defined as it was, fostered the environment out of which Patrick Kavanagh's notion of parochialism and indeed post-colonialism emerged. TGH can be viewed as a reaction to the nativist movement in Ireland which sought, in the early decades of the Free State, to define itself as the pure, rural Catholic heart of Ireland to the exclusion of all other possible national identities. Through the character of Maguire, Kavanagh portrays a 'native' that certainly would not fit the cosy image of the nativist movement. Said identifies the nativist dilemma:

'Nativism, alas, reinforces the distinction (between ruler and ruled) while reevaluating the weaker or subservient partner. And it has often led to compelling but demagogic assertions about a native past, narrative or actuality that stands free from worldly time itself' (58).

Kavanagh brilliantly lampooned the Irish nativist position in a poem entitled 'Memory of Father Michael', first published in 1944, in which he laments the smothering nature of the 'puddles of the past' in which he felt contemporary writers were forced to wade by the nativist domination of cultural discourses. He wrote:

'Culture is always something that was,
 Something pedants can measure,
 Skull of bard, thigh of chief,

Depth of dried-up river.

Shall we be thus forever?

Shall we be thus forever?' (59).

One of the principal dangers in the nativist doctrine is the tendency towards exclusive definitions of national identity. Because of its dependence on the colonial era of a particular country, nativism defines itself in clear distinction to that colonial regime and consequently it has difficulty in arriving at an objective interpretation of the effects of the colonial era. The relatively positive effects of the colonial era are shrouded in the new dogma of resistance to all-things even vaguely associated with the coloniser. In fact, a common experience of the post-colonial era is the realisation of the failure of the new state to deal radically with the perceived social and cultural ills created by the colonial era. In the early years of the Irish Free State a close link was created and fostered by various interest groups between what F.S.L. Lyons refers to as 'the continuing threat to Catholic purity and innocence of foreign - more specifically, English - influences' (60). The attempt to define an Irish cultural identity by church and state effectively ignored the idea of a diverse national cultural complexion in favour of essentialisations such as Catholicism (with its vital grip on the educational system), Gaelicisation and the promotion of the Irish language. The state initiated many of the legislative programmes which would perpetrate this narrowing of national perception, such as the Censorship of Publications Act of 1929 (61), which used three

general criteria when considering censorship; the "indecent or obscene" nature of a book, the term 'indecent' being interpreted in its broadest sense; texts "unduly devoted to crime"; and texts which advocated "the unnatural prevention of conception or the procurement of abortion or miscarriage" (62). Also by officially recognising, in Article 44 of the 1937 constitution, the 'special position' of the Roman Catholic Church 'as the guardian of the Faith professed by the great majority of the citizens' (63), the state continued this exclusive expression of national identity while simultaneously laying claim to the six counties of Northern Ireland in articles 2 and 3 of the same constitution. This contradiction at the heart of the Irish constitution provides evidence that in 1937, and indeed up to relatively recent times, the state was not yet ready officially to acknowledge the different cultural and political traditions existing on the island of Ireland or to provide a framework within which these traditions could co-exist.

Another of the negative effects of the nativist position, so often a feature of the post-colonial society, was the smothering of the emergence of a vital national self-criticism. While the establishment of a post-colonial national identity almost inevitably involves what Stuart Hall refers to as 'the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past' (64), the danger lies in the exclusive nature of that positioning. Traditions existing long before the foundation of the Irish Free State, Protestant Unionism and Protestant Nationalism for example, were excluded from the rural,

Catholic, isolationist policies of the new government, policies described by F.S.L. Lyons as 'both Gaelic and Catholic' and 'liable to evoke hostility and suspicion in the six counties of Northern Ireland' (65). Said notes:

'While it is impossible to avoid the combative, assertive early stages in the nationalist identity there is a good deal of promise in getting beyond them, not remaining trapped in the emotional self-indulgence of celebrating one's own identity' (66).

The 'emotional self-indulgence of celebrating one's own identity' in the Irish Free State context masked a social and economic stagnation in which the majority of the people assumed to compose this national identity lived a basic existence, with poverty, disease, such as tuberculosis (67), and emigration as quotidian events. De Valera's vision of Ireland, in Roy Foster's words, 'was of small agricultural units, each self-sufficiently supporting a frugal family', while 'his ideal, like the popular literary versions, was built on the basis of a fundamentally dignified and ancient peasant way of life' (68), a vision which either ignored or mis-read the actual trend of urbanisation that was occurring in Ireland and other European countries. In his comprehensive study of the Irish economy David O'Mahony notes:

'Emigration has been primarily a rural phenomenon. People have emigrated from the cities and towns too, but the influx of people to them from the country has more than made up for their losses

through emigration. The result is that the decline in population has been brought about entirely by the fall in rural population. By 1961 the urban population of the Republic had increased by 25% as compared with 1841, while the rural population had fallen to less than one third of its level in that year' (69).

In his analysis of the nativist position, Said points to some important considerations in the attempt to move beyond limited and limiting national definitions. Firstly, there is 'the possibility of discovering a world not constructed out of warring essences' (70), a theory that is explored in the writings of Roy Foster (71) who argues, in the Irish context, that 'there may be grounds for hope that the discovery of an outward-looking and inclusive cultural nationalism will be the salient business of young and not so young intellectuals and educators' (72). Similarly, in her address to the Proceedings of the Cultures of Ireland Group Conference in September, 1991, President Mary Robinson stressed the idea of a 'double cultural residence' which would 'embrace all traditions and deny none' (73). Interestingly, she quoted Richard Kearney's observations on the poetry of Seamus Heaney:

'A Northern Irish poet who migrated south, at once exiled and at home, haunted by borders and partitions, exposed to the culture of coloniser and colonised, Catholic and Protestant, Gael and Saxon (who) has practised an art of making contradictions dance' (74).

Said posits the most important consideration in the move beyond nativism when he suggests:

'Moving beyond nativism does not mean abandoning nationality, but it does mean thinking of local identity as not exhaustive, and therefore not being anxious to confine oneself to one's own sphere, with its ceremonies of belonging, its built-in chauvinism and its limiting sense of security' (75).

There are close parallels between Said's notion of a move beyond an exclusive model of nationality and Patrick Kavanagh's espousal of the merits of a critical and sustaining parochialism, a popular contemporary concept with the post-modern espousal of the importance of the local. Kavanagh places the local parish at the heart of 'all great civilisations' (76) but he warns against the cosy option of regarding the parish and the idea of parochialism as a self-sustaining, fixed reality, which is arguably one of the foundational pillars of the nativist position. Kavanagh argues:

'Advising people not to be ashamed of having the courage of their remote parish, is not free from many dangers. There is always that element of bravado which takes pleasure in the notion that the potato-patch is the ultimate. To be parochial a man needs the right kind of sensitive courage and the right kind of sensitive humility' (77).

While both Kavanagh and Said appear to be moving away from a limited, self-obsessed nativist concept of nationality towards

a more critical and pluralist perception of national identity, there remains the under-lying problem regarding the precise nature of a national or community essence. The previous pages have illustrated that the new Irish state reacted against the colonial era by adopting a nativist position in which 'pure' forms of Irishness, including the Irish language, Gaelic games and Catholicism, were upheld as sources of national pride and were intrinsically linked with the concept of Irish identity. The inherent difficulty with any such attempted national definition is the tendency towards generalisation and the assumption that there is indeed a national identity that is 'Irish', containing a quintessential core of characteristics that could objectively be classed as Irish. The role of history, or rather the process of historical interpretation, is crucial to the creation and re-creation, of a native identity. Thomas Davis, a leader of the Young Ireland movement in the 1840's, famously captured a view of history that found much credence with the Revivalists of the late 19th century, when he addressed students at Trinity College in 1839:

'The national mind should be filled to overflowing with such thoughts. They (historical thoughts) are more enriching than mines of gold, or ten thousand fields of corn, or the cattle of a thousand hills; more ennobling than palaced cities stored with the triumph of war or art; more supporting in danger's hour than colonies, or fleets, or armies. The history of a nation is the birthright of her sons - who strips them of that "takes that which not enriches him but makes them poor indeed"' (78).

Davis' high-blown rhetoric and advocacy of a glorious Celtic past were not simply personal reflections on Irish history but, crucially, were proof for him that the past provided a model for the future of the nation, exemplifying Homi K. Bhaba's identification of the attempt by cultural nationalists to identify 'a "true" national past' (79). The Celtic Ireland described by Davis, and later by W.B. Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory amongst others, was a social, cultural and political ideal to be worked towards and not merely a source of inspiration in difficult political times. The use of the 'Celtic' image of history was utilised by a variety of interest groups including the socialist struggle against British imperialism. For example Michael Davitt (1846-1906), the founder of the Land League in 1879, linked Ireland's Celtic past with an envisaged glorious post-capitalist and post-imperialist future:

'The part played by Ireland in the early Christian civilisation of Europe, in the nurture of learning, and in the scholastic labors (sic) of her students and missionaries after the break-up of the Roman Empire - all these records of great humanizing service rendered to society by the Celtic people of Ireland in the childhood period of European civilisation have been obscured or denied by the agencies of English prejudice, in order to keep from the Irish the recognition which these services frequently obtained from continental powers in the Middle Ages' (80).

This perception of the past can be found in the writings of many influential figures during the high point of Irish cultural

nationalism, from Douglas Hyde's (1860-1947) cultural polemic 'The Necessity for the De-Anglicisation of Ireland' in 1892 (81) up until Eamon de Valera's (1882-1975) St. Patrick's Day address of 1943. In that famous speech, de Valera linked the glories of the Celtic past with the activities of revolutionaries from Wolfe Tone to Padraig Pearse (1879-1916). Advocating Pearse's concept of the necessity and indeed glorification of the 'blood sacrifice' (82), de Valera declared:

'It was the idea of such an Ireland, happy, vigorous, spiritual, that made successive generations of men give their lives to win religious and political liberty, and that will urge men in our own and future generations to die, if need be, so that these liberties may be preserved' (83).

One of the consequences of this approach to history was the establishment of a state dedicated to the ideals of those who looked to an indefinite and ill-defined period of history for their contemporary model. In practice it allowed the overwhelmingly conservative, Catholic bias of the new state to dominate and a version of isolationist 'Irishness' to become the norm. The effect which this had upon the cultural life of the country was devastating. Terence Brown notes:

'That invigorating interchange between a society and its writers, where ideas both indigenous and imported circulate freely, did not exist in an Ireland which seemed to choose a narrow self-absorption and a rejection of current existence in a celebration

of a rigidly defined national essence' (84).

1.3 The Counter-Revival.

In response to this nativist positioning there emerged in the 1930's and 40's what the editors of The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing (85) have called The Counter-Revival, that is a period of cultural and intellectual reaction to the conservatism and rigidity of the new state that focused on the lack of tangible social and cultural change since the intense rhetoric of the foundation of the state in 1922. Based around the writings of AE (George Russell), Sean O'Faolain, Patrick Kavanagh, Frank O'Connor and Brian O'Nolan amongst others, the counter-revival played a crucial role in countering the mythology of the Catholic, rural Irish essence. This rural idyll of self-reliant farmers and fireside philosophers was, in Theodore Hoppen's words, 'a bogus prospect, the bogusness of which had become more and more obvious as the years passed by' (86). The poverty of rural Ireland in the early decades of the Free State, combined with massive emigration [between 1911 and 1926 alone over 400,000 people emigrated from Ireland (87)], was rarely if ever reflected in official government statements or speeches. In an editorial from The Bell magazine in June, 1943, Sean O'Faolain bitterly attacked the hypocrisies of the new state, where he argued that what the people really wanted was 'fair play, solid leases, education' (88) and he questioned the perception of history that purported a new Celticism, where 'we have since the dawn of our history been united here in our efforts to eject all foreign

ways, peoples, manners, and customs - which is, of course, arrant nonsense' (89). He saw in organisations such as The Gaelic League and The Catholic Truth Society 'a lump of mush softened out by the manipulations of that uprooted middle-class which has cashed in on 1913-1922, all of whom see in this kind of thing a bulwark against those final changes they naturally fear and would do anything to prevent' (90). Patrick Kavanagh's The Great Hunger (1942) explodes the myth of the rural idyll and seeks to portray the protagonist, Patrick Maguire, as a suffering, hopeless and somewhat pathetic representative of those masses ignored and isolated by the new state's conservatism and by society's tacit endorsement of a rigid Catholicism designed to engender a fear of even the most harmless of pursuits. The over-reliance of the Revivalists and the 1916 revolutionaries on the imagery of the nation rather than on the tarnished reality inevitably led to the dilemma posed by Victor Shklovsky, a dilemma which could neatly apply to the image creation of the first decades of the Irish Free State:

'Since the purpose of imagery is to remind us, by approximation, of those meanings for which the image stands, and since, apart from this, imagery is unnecessary for thought, we must be more familiar with the image than with what it clarifies' (91).

One of the most important features of this critical counter-revival was a more realistic and pragmatic approach to all aspects of Irish social, cultural and political life and a conscious distancing from the Gaelicised romanticism and the

dominant, almost xenophobic 'ourselves alone' (the English translation of Sinn Fein) attitude adopted particularly in de Valera's administrations. In a variety of fields, from political satire to the theatre, the counter-revival writers, in F.S.L. Lyons's phrase, 'found themselves frequently in conflict with the restrictive and stifling society in which they had to work and from which, for a time at least, they sought to escape' (92). O'Faolain blamed many of Ireland's difficulties in the 30's and 40's on the 'fervid Gaelic addicts' (93) and he regarded the Gaelic League as 'the opponent of all modernisations and improvisations - being by nature, in its constant references to the middle ages - terrified of the modern world, afraid of modern life, inbred in thought, and, so, utterly narrow in outlook' (94). The Censorship of Publications Act of 1929 appeared to many as the embodiment of the narrow, restrictive government that sought to protect a pure Irish people from the effects of corrupting literature. George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), amongst others, regarded the act as a backward step which would only lead to international ridicule when he commented:

'In the nineteenth century all the world was concerned about Ireland. In the twentieth, nobody outside Ireland cares two-pence what happens to her... if, having broken England's grip of her, she slops back into the Atlantic as a little grass patch in which a few million moral cowards are not allowed to call their souls their own by a handful of morbid Catholics, mad with heresyphobia, unnaturally combining with a handful of Calvinists mad with sexphobia... then the world will let "these Irish" go

their own way into insignificance without the smallest concern' (95).

Almost inevitably, the counter-revival began to influence perceptions of Irish history and particularly the close colonial relationship with Britain. The self-critical tone of the counter-revival began to re-appraise popularly held notions of the culpability of the colonisers and the innocence of the colonised. Sean O'Casey's (1884-1964) 1926 play The Plough and the Stars, for example, provided an alternative reading of the events of the Easter Rising of 1916 for which the new state appeared unready, as evidenced by the riots that followed its production in the Abbey Theatre. In response to the marches of the Volunteers in Dublin prior to the rising, for example, The Covey comments:

"When I think of all th'problems in front o' th' workers, it makes me sick to be lookin' at oul' codgers goin' about dhressed up like green-accoutered figures gone astray out of a toyshop!" (96).

O'Casey's belief that the voice of Ireland lay 'in the hunger cry of the nation's poor' (97) signalled a shift away from the stylised nationalism of Yeats' Cathleen Ni Hoolihan (1902), a play he grandiosely described as being about '...the perpetual struggle of the cause of Ireland and every other ideal cause against private hopes and dreams, against all that we mean when we say the world' (98). One of the aims of the counter-revival

was the attempted articulation of the poverty, frustration and hopelessness experienced by the majority of people in Ireland for whom the romantic and nationalist rhetoric of the preceding half-century had done little to change the actuality of their lives. Consequently, the questioning of the direction of the new state focused on the icons and ideologies which under-pinned its structure. Many of the latter had acquired a significance in the colonial era of opposition that was incompatible with the brave new world offered by the establishment of a new state. The gulf between de Valera's imagery and the life depicted in Conrad Arensberg and Solon Kimball's ground-breaking anthropological survey of Co. Clare in the 1930's (99) could not be more marked. According to the latter, rural life in Ireland appeared stagnant with little to offer in terms of social mobility, economic advancement and unconventional inter-personal relationships. For example, the lack of social gatherings for males and females fuelled the rising number of unmarried men and women and directly influenced patterns of emigration:

'In Clare, at least, they (men and women) go to mass, to town, or to sportive gatherings with companions of their own sex. Till recently and even now in remote districts, a conventional peasant woman always kept several paces behind her man, even if they were walking somewhere together' (100).

Their description of the daily life of the small farmers, the majority land-holders in Clare, is one of unmitigated drudgery with rigidly defined roles for men and women of varying ages.

While it would be dangerous to generalise about the whole country from a survey of only one county, the authors point to the fact that 63% of the Free State's population lived in circumstances similar to those people surveyed in Co. Clare (101). The reality of their lives 'involves a continuous activity by which the household group orders its life and fulfils its needs of nourishment and shelter in the midst of a carefully patterned regularity of habitual behaviours' (102). In reality, de Valera's image of a cosy rural idyll was rapidly being replaced by those who left the villages for the towns and abroad. The change brought on by emigration and gradual industrialisation created a process 'of continuous change at all points in the social order' (103). This change, typified by the statistic that by 1964 only 33% of the population were engaged in agriculture as opposed to 53% in 1926 (104), gradually began to erode traditional perceptions of the Irish 'nation'. Despite the fact that 'industrial policy up to 1932 was concerned primarily with the protection of native industries from foreign competition rather than with the establishment of new ones' (105) vital projects such as the rural electrification scheme [begun in the early 1920's but not fully completed until 1964 (106)], the creation of the Electricity Supply Board (1927) and the establishment of a Land Commission to oversee the redistribution of land [450,000 acres distributed to 24,000 families by 1932 (107)] introduced an element of change, albeit at a slow pace, that would eventually undermine the de Valerian perception of the Irish 'nation'. The broadening of economic horizons inevitably brings with it a desire for an equivalent broadening of social, cultural

and political life and it was out of such an environment that the counter-revivalists sought to extend the debate on national identity beyond previously sacred ideologies and icons.

1.4 Ireland: An Imagined Community?

One of the main conclusions to be drawn from the first few decades of the Irish Free State is that no single perception of the Irish 'nation' was either uniquely valid or justifiable. The regression into isolationism after the end of colonial rule is a common experience for many post-colonial countries. The inheritance of, amongst other things, a civil service, legal system and more importantly a language from the colonial era ensured that any perception of national identity would inevitably be bound up with interpretations of the depth and validity of that colonial era. In his examination of post-colonial Kenya, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o notes:

'All this demonstrates the complexity of the politics of culture in a post-colonial society. The situation cannot be properly understood outside the framework of the neo-colonial economic and political structures which are, in effect, colonial structures under another name' (108).

Ngugi identifies the importance of the attempted understanding and deconstruction of the colonial era in the process of analysing the post-colonial condition. His views echo those of Frantz Fanon:

'Decolonisation, as we know, is a historical process: that is to say that it cannot be understood, it cannot become intelligible nor clear to itself except in the exact measure that we can discern the movements which give it historical form and content' (109).

Both Ngugi and Fanon point to the importance of a historically contextualised post-coloniality, a process which undoubtedly improves the environment out of which a concept of nationhood can emerge. However, one of the main assumptions underpinning much of the debate about the essential nature of 'Irishness' is found in the concept of a definable nation, whether in strictly defined nationalistic terms or in the more loosely grouped counter-revival arguments. In his book entitled Imagined Communities Benedict Anderson defines a nation as 'an imagined community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign' (110). Paralleling Said's idea of a nation's 'shared memory', Anderson elaborates and proceeds to claim that 'In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contacts (and perhaps even these) are imagined' (111). While this might initially appear to undermine the entire concept of the colonial and post-colonial nation, there are interesting tangents to Anderson's arguments that illuminate the often over-used and unquestioned terminology of nationhood. His idea of the subjectivity of the nation concept certainly holds truth in the Irish context.

As examined earlier, various groups and individuals selectively

distorted Irish history in an attempt to justify or legitimise their individual political intentions. The history of Ireland could be frozen at various points to 'prove' a particular political stance and to bolster the position of various power blocks. The differing interpretations of the Irish 'nation', and indeed differing beliefs about the origin of that 'nation', relied upon a highly subjective use of the past. The poetry of Thomas Davis, James Clarence Mangan (1803-49) and particularly Samuel Ferguson (1810-86) during the mid to late 19th century era of high romanticism in Irish poetry (112), provides an example of the imaginative portrayal of the past which was used to galvanise a contemporary political movement. Their poetry proved influential in the writings of later republicans such as Padraig Pearse and the role of their poetry in the formation of Ireland's arguably 'imagined' links with the Celtic past cannot be understated. The language of republicanism in Ireland echoed the grandiloquent sentiments of these poets for the latter half of the nineteenth century and much of the early half of the twentieth century. The last verse of Ferguson's 'Lament for Thomas Davis', for example, presents the image of the Irish nation that dominated the ideology of the Free State until as late as the 1960's and in many ways provided the model of the 'imagined community' as presented by those who dictated the social and cultural direction of the new state:

'O brave young men, my love, my pride, my promise,
 'Tis on you my hopes are set,
 In manliness, in kindliness, in justice,

To make Erin a nation yet;
 Self-respecting, self-relying, self-advancing,
 In union or in severance, free and strong,
 And if God grant this, then, under God, to Thomas Davis
 Let the greater praise belong!' (113)

The Revival movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries arguably 'imagined' a future society based on an equally 'imagined' perception of a Celtic Irish past, and this was the revival as proposed by de Valera and others. Declan Kiberd has attacked this revival as a 'sentimentalisation of backwardness in Ireland' (114) and points to a parallel revival in the work of James Joyce (1882-1941), particularly in the guise of Stephen Dedalus, the hero of Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916). It is interesting to note that Patrick Kavanagh, whose own writings were to 'act as a liberation to younger poets' (115) perceived an attitude to nationality and self in Joyce that he could not see in Yeats. There are crucial elements in the character of Stephen Dedalus that point to the nature of the post-colonial counter-revival. During a game of handball, Stephen discusses Irish history with Davin, a believer in the blood-sacrifice ideals of Irish revolutionaries. Stephen notes:

'The soul is born first in those moments I told you of. It has a slow and dark birth, more mysterious than the birth of the body. When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those

nets' (116).

Crucially, Stephen sees the emotional and intellectual strangulation, and delimitation, brought on by fixed concepts of nationality, language and religion (as does Buffun in Cromwell) and it is precisely from these 'nets' that both Joyce and the counter revivalists, and indeed much post-colonial Irish literature, sought to free themselves. Anderson similarly regards the concept of the 'nation' as open to the control of political, cultural and religious pressure groups:

'Indeed, as we shall see, the 'nation' proved an invention upon which it was impossible to secure a patent. It became available for pirating by widely different, and sometimes unexpected, hands' (117).

In many ways, the variety of forms of Irish nationalism could be perceived as being based on a notion of an imagined community, a contemporary community finding which finds its greatest source of legitimacy from a specific period in history but whose links, on closer examination, appear more imagined than actual. In fact, at times of extreme crisis in the national identity, or at times when that perceived identity is most under threat, the imagined links with past communities become most focused. In the Republic of Ireland the icons of republicanism have faced a school of revisionist historiography whose major characteristic is, in Ronan Fanning's words, 'a continuous compulsion to confront myth and mythology' (118), but no doubt if the existence of the

Republic were to be threatened then these icons, from Theobald Wolfe Tone to Padraig Pearse, would be duly revived and re-revised to perform their required role in the national imagination. Anderson does not limit the notion of an imagined community to either coloniser or colonised and his description of the British monarchical accessions over the centuries leave little doubt about his perception of 'institutions' which, in the popular imagination, represent the nation:

'It is nice that what eventually became the late British Empire has not been ruled by an 'English' dynasty since the early eleventh century: since then a motley parade of Normans (Plantaganets), Welsh (Tudor), Scots (Stuarts), Dutch (House of Orange) and Germans (Hanoverians) have squatted on the imperial throne' (119).

The easy labels of nationalist, unionist, republican, fenian, etc. belie the complexities of internal and external Irish history. Seamus Deane clearly articulates the problem as 'the question of how the individual subject can be envisaged in relation to its community, its past history, and a possible future' (120). In his introduction to a series of essays by Terry Eagleton, Frederic Jameson and Edward Said, entitled Nationalism, Colonialism and Culture, Deane accuses the revisionist school of an excess of reductionism in which historical interpretation has confined events 'within groups, interests, classes and periods' (121) where 'any attempt to see these issues as variations on a ghostly paradigm, like colonialism, is characterised as

"ideological" and, on that account, is doomed' (122). This view is somewhat unfair to the general trend of the revisionist school of history because the only feasible method of understanding a 'ghostly paradigm' like colonialism is to engage in a process of deconstruction, in other words, a re-appraisal of the relationships involved. If, for example, a nation was to be analysed according to Ferdinand de Saussure's model for analysing a language, then the first step would be to isolate the nation at a given period in its history and examine the nation 'synchronically' (123), that is to analyse the various components that compose the nation, in much the same way as a linguist would analyse the signs that compose a language. Saussure claimed that 'In the linguistic system there are only differences' (124), hinting that meaning is not intrinsic to a sign but that a sign only has meaning as a result of, in Terry Eagleton's phrase, 'cultural and historical convention' (125). Therefore, an analysis of the post-colonial nation must identify classes, interest groups, social pressures and internal tensions, 'differences', at a given period in the nation's development, in order that general interpretations might have an added credence. In many ways, one of the most important ideals of a post-colonial society is the ability to evaluate honestly and critically every element in its social, religious, cultural and political make-up and recognise that the removal of the coloniser, the intimate enemy, heralds an era of self-responsibility and self-analysis that in many ways will prove a more difficult exercise than the definition of self in the colonial period. Irish post-colonialism must necessarily be critical of the conflicting ideologies that

seek to shape its expression. The role of the revisionist school of Irish history is therefore crucial in the move beyond historical stereotypes towards a more flexible, inclusive and self-critical perception of national identity. Richard Kearney offers his interpretation:

'The notion of the 'Irish mind' should be comprehended in terms of the multiplicity of Irish minds. This tension between unity and difference is crucial. And it must be preserved in the face of ideological reductionism. Modern Irish culture is larger than the distinct ideological traditions - nationalist, unionist or otherwise - from which it derives and which it critically reinterprets' (126).

1.5 Conclusion.

The basis of post-colonial perceptions of Irish literature should be a process of re-configuration. The inherent difficulties in this process arise from the fundamentally unsure and insecure nature of the birth of post-colonialism. The historical moment when the colonial era came to an official end is fixed, but the consequent changes in national perception are most certainly not. Roy Foster has commented that the nature of post-colonialism 'should mean the kind of dislocation which happens when the coloniser is gone, the landscape has changed, the identifications have changed, the power structures are new but the old language and the old modes of using language, both to articulate and demonstrate power, are still there' (127). The crucial point is

that the examination of Irish literature from a post-colonial perspective will necessarily concern itself with the points of intersection of different histories, competing cultures and contrasting political viewpoints, although it has to be stated that the post-colonial perspective is not without its critics (128). When examining Patrick Kavanagh's The Great Hunger as a post-colonial text it is essential to interrogate the point of historical intersection that the poem marks.

When asked about the central features of any post-colonial interpretation of the past, Roy Foster replied 'You have to be unsure of your foundations. That is essential' (129). In conclusion, it may be said that there is no definitive interpretation of Irish history and therefore a post-colonial reading of a particular era will necessarily be a positioning, a relative observation of the various influences that compose that era. In The Great Hunger, for example, Patrick Kavanagh was not necessarily destroying the revivalist myth of the rural Irish idyll but was rather presenting another side of rural Irish life, positioning his protagonist, Patrick Maguire, at a specific point in his existence. He was, in Antoinette Quinn's words 'unconcerned with Ireland's artistic, legendary or mythic past, with the adaptation of Gaelic literary techniques or the preservation of Gaelic literary discourse' (130). Kavanagh realised the sustaining power of myth (131) but, crucially, he was equally capable of exposing its limitations. The post-colonial perspective in Irish history, and indeed in Irish literature, involves an examination of complex relationships,

interdependencies and over-lapping traditions which have, in many ways, produced a composite culture. It is essential to move beyond limiting perceptions of national identity towards a more realistic and easily identifiable model of identity. The Great Hunger was a vital step on the path towards this new identity.

CHAPTER ONE - ENDNOTES

1. Professor Francis J. Byrne dates Celtic settlements in Ireland from this era in eds. Moody, Martin and Byrne, The Course of Irish History (Cork: Mercier Press, 1967), p.43.
2. The definition of a colony found in Chambers (1992) dictionary is typical: 'a body of persons settled in a foreign country, or forming a separate ethnic, cultural or occupational group', p.204.
3. Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), p.8.
4. See the discussion of The Empire Writes Back in introductory chapter.
5. David Lloyd, Anomalous States (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1993), p.155.
6. Moody, Martin and Byrne, p.35.
7. Michael Herity and George Eogan, Ireland in Prehistory (London: Routledge, 1977), p. 16. This book provides an excellent overview of Irish history (and pre-historic settlements) through archaeological evidence.
8. See chapter two of Herity and Eogan's Ireland in Prehistory, pp. 16-57.
9. See 'Under Ben Bulbin', p.451 of Yeats's Poems (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1989), edited by A. Norman Jeffares.
10. ed. Maurice Moynihan, Speeches and Statements of Eamon de Valera 1917-73 (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1980), p.476.
11. ed. Seamus Deane, The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing (Derry: Field Day Publications, 1991), Vol.2, p.221.
12. Edward Curtis, A History of Ireland (London: Methuen, 1936), p.75.
13. Robert Kee, Ireland - A History (London: Sphere Books, 1973), p.29.
14. See chapter xi of Curtis, quoted above, pp. 147-66.
15. Robert Kee, p.30, writes:

'We know exactly what the state of Ireland was like when Henry VIII came to the throne almost four and a half centuries after the Norman invasion because we have an account of it in the state papers for 1515: 'More than sixty counties called regions inhabited with the King's Irish enemies...where reigneth more than sixty chief captains wherein some call themselves Kings, some Princes, some Dukes, some Archdukes that liveth only by the

sword and obeyeth unto no other temporal person...and every of the said captains maketh war and peace for himself...Also there be thirty great captains of the English folk that follow the same Irish order...and every of them maketh war and peace for himself without any licence of the King'. It was in 1534 that Henry VIII decided to put an end to such a state of affairs. Ireland was in a particularly advanced state of anarchy that year because the great House of Fitzgerald, earls of Kildare - the very House that was meant to represent the royal authority in Ireland - was in open rebellion against the Crown. Henry laid down an all-important change on paper: all lands in Ireland, whether owned by Gaelic Irish or Gaelicised English, were to be surrendered to the Crown and then re-granted, thus asserting unquestionably the Crown's claim to ultimate control over them. His daughter, Elizabeth I, was to make this control a reality and apply it with a ruthless severity'.

16. R.F. Foster, Modern Ireland - 1600-1972 (London: Penguin, 1988), p.3.

17. J.C. Beckett, The Making of Modern Ireland - 1603-1923, 2nd.edt., (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), p.23.

18. See chapter 3, 'Protestant or Recusant: The Constitutional Struggle, 1603-1641' of J.C. Beckett, pp.40-82.

19. Foster, p.14.

20. Moody, Martin and Byrne, p.189.

21. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Decolonising the Mind (London: James Curry, 1981), p.44.

22. Foster, pp.107-117.

23. Beckett, p.109.

24. F.S.L. Lyons, Culture and Anarchy in Ireland - 1890-1939 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p.26.

25. Ibid, p.57.

26. Ibid, p.57.

27. Moody, Martin and Byrne, p.127.

28. Lyons, p.177.

29. R.F. Foster, Paddy and Mr. Punch (London: Allen Lane, 1993), pp.21-39.

30. Ibid., p.26.

31. Ibid., p.26.

32. Ibid., p.26.

33. Ibid., p.22.

34. Ibid., p.26.

35. Ibid., p.38.

36. Ibid., p.24.

37. Ibid., p.24.

38. The poem can be found in ed. A. Norman Jeffares, Yeats' Poems (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1989), pp.5-35. In a seminal essay from 1892 ('Hopes and Fears for Irish Literature' in ed. Mark Storey, Poetry and Ireland Since 1900 - A Source Book (London: Routledge, 1988), p.76), Yeats indicated his admiration for the Bards of Celtic poetry while virtually announcing the manifesto of the Celtic revival:

'Can we but learn a little of their devotion to form, a little of their hatred of the commonplace and the banal, we may make all these restless energies of ours alike the inspiration and the theme of a new and wonderful literature. We have behind us in the past the most moving of legends and a history full of lofty passions. If we can but take that history and those legends and turn them into dramas, poems and stories full of the living and the present, and make them massive with conviction and profound with reverie, we may deliver that new great utterance for which the world is waiting'.

39. ed. A. Norman Jeffares, Yeats' Poems (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1989), p.483.

40. Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism, p.11.

41. In chapter 8, section 3, of his book Ireland - An Economic History 1780-1939 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) pp. 187-199, entitled 'The Famine and Political Economy', pp.191-2, Cormac O'Grada writes:

'Establishment views on what could or should be done during famines have evolved since the mid-nineteenth century. Today, for instance, the notion that feeding the hungry during a famine can serve only to make matters worse would find few supporters, but it was the firm belief of the youthful but already cocksure Economist in 1846-9. For the Economist, paying people 'not what their labour is worth, not what their labour can be purchased for, but what is sufficient for a comfortable subsistence for themselves and their family...would stimulate every man to marry and populate as fast as he could, like a rabbit in a warren'. For Trevelyan, relief could only lead to 'general reliance on our depot, a general relaxation of private effort...and a general failure and disappointment in the end'.

However, the British response to the famine was only a contributory factor in the general calamity, as T.W. Moody pointed out, [T.W. Moody, 'Irish History and Irish Mythology' in

ed. Brady, Ciaran, Interpreting Irish History - The Debate on Historical Revisionism (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1994)] thereby eschewing over-simplistic readings of a complicated social and cultural tragedy:

'The great famine (1845-50) and the land war (1879-82) together produced a crop of strong and bitter myths. As seen by nationalists at the time and subsequently the famine was a 'fearful murder committed on the mass of the people' by a heartless british government and its no less heartless adherents in Ireland, the landlords. Historical research has drawn a very different picture. The famine was too monstrous and impersonal to be the mere product of individual ill-will, or 'the fiendish outcome of a well-planned conspiracy' .

42. Foster, Modern Ireland, p.471.

43. Said, Culture and Imperialism, p.266.

44. Ibid., p.269.

45. Foster, Paddy and Mr. Punch, p.30.

46. Brendan Kennelly, Cromwell (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1987), p.16.

47. Ibid., p.15.

48. Ibid., p.159.

49. Private correspondence, 1-4-96.

50. ed. Richard Pine, Dark Fathers Into Light (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1994), p.68.

51. From a transcript of an interview held at Oxford University, March 20th, 1996.

52. ed. Chrisman, Laura and Williams, Patrick, Post-Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p.14.

53. ed. Mark Storey, Poetry and Ireland since 1800 - A source Book (London: Routledge, 1988), p.82.

54. Foster, Modern Ireland, p.448.

55. An interesting analysis of Daniel Corkery and his most influential work, The Hidden Ireland (1925), can be found in Chapter 9 (p.195) of Foster's book quoted above.

56. ed. John P. Frayne, Uncollected Prose by W.B. Yeats (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p.273.

57. Ibid., p.93.

58. Said, Culture and Imperialism, p.275.
59. Patrick Kavanagh, Collected Poems (Newbridge: Goldsmith Press, 1984), p.148.
60. Lyons, p.154.
61. An excellent review of the effects of this act can be found in Julia Carson's book Banned in Ireland (London: Routledge, 1990) in which she interviews a variety of writers directly affected by censorship, from Benedict Kiely to Brian Moore.
62. Ibid., pp.3-4.
63. From Bunreacht na hEireann (The Constitution of Ireland), (Dublin: Government Publications, 1937), p.144. However, this article recognising the special position of the Catholic Church was deleted in a referendum held in 1972.
64. Chrisman and Williams, p.394.
65. Lyons, p.147.
66. Said, Culture and Imperialism, p.277.
67. F.S.L. Lyons (Ireland Since the Famine (London: Fontana, 1963), p.572, writes:

'This disease (TB), which for generation after generation had eaten into the already declining population, was particularly dire in its effects because its incidence was always heaviest in the twenty to thirty-four age group. As recently as the decade 1911-20 it had claimed 205 victims per annum for each 100,000 of the population. Thereafter the situation improved, though when Dr. Noel Browne came into office it was still killing between 3,000 and 4,000 people every year'.
68. Foster, Modern Ireland, p.538.
69. David O'Mahony, The Irish Economy (Cork: Cork University Press, 1964), p.8.
70. Said, Culture and Imperialism, p.277.
71. He argues the revisionist case explicitly in an article entitled 'We are all Revisionists now', first published in 'The Irish Review' in 1986 and reproduced in The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing, Volume 111, pp. 583-6. In fact, this section from the Field Day anthology, entitled 'Challenging the Canon: Revisionism and Cultural Criticism' (pp. 561-681) provides a cross-section of conflicting views on the nature of the Irish revisionist school of history. Similarly, a thorough account of the nature of the debate over Irish historical revisionism can be gleaned from Ciaran Brady (ed) Interpreting Irish History - The Debate on Historical Revisionism, referred to above (fn.41).

72. Foster, Paddy and Mr. Punch, p.38.
73. ed. Edna Longley, Culture in Ireland: Division or Diversity? (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, 1991), p.6.
74. Ibid., p.6.
75. Said, Culture and Imperialism, p.277.
76. Patrick Kavanagh, Collected Pruse (London: Martin Brian and O'Keefe, 1967), p.282.
77. Ibid., p.283.
78. The Nation, Vol.IV, No.278 (Saturday, January 29, 1848), p.75, in an article entitled 'The Young Irishman of the Middle Classes'.
79. Homi K. Bhaba, Narrating the Nation (London: Routledge, 1990), p.303.
80. Deane, ed., Vol.2, p.279.
81. An interesting commentary and important extracts from this text can be found in Volume 2 of The Field Day Anthology, pp. 527-533.
82. In 1913, Pearse wrote: 'Bloodshed is a cleansing and a satisfying thing and the nation which regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood. There are many things more horrible than bloodshed, and slavery is one of them' (Field Day, Vol. 2, p.558).
83. Moynihan, ed., p.466.
84. Deane, ed., Vol.3, p.90.
85. Published in 1991, the Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing, edited by Seamus Deane, is a comprehensive and fascinating three volume anthology of Irish writing from early Irish poetry of the 6th century to the political musings of the Rev. Ian Paisley. The idea of the Counter Revival is discussed by Terence Brown on p.89 of Vol.1. An interesting review of The Field Day Anthology by Kevin Barry can be found in The Irish Review, Vol.12 (Spring/Summer 1992), pp. 50-55.
86. K. Theodore Hoppen, Ireland since 1800- Conflict and Conformity (London: Longman, 1989), p.215.
87. O'Mahony, p.4.
88. The Bell, Vol.6, No.3 (June, 1943), p.185.
89. Ibid., p.189.
90. Ibid., p.191.

91. ed. David Lodge, Modern Criticism and Theory (London: Longman, 1988), p.16.
92. Lyons, p.171.
93. The Bell, Vol.9, No.3 (December, 1944), p.193.
94. Ibid., p.193.
95. The Irish Statesman, Vol.11, no.11 (November 17, 1928), p.208.
96. Sean O'Casey, Juno and the Paycock and The Plough and the Stars (London: Macmillan, 1948), p.111.
97. Cairns and Richards, p.130.
98. Article entitled 'Mr. Yeats's New Play' in The United Irishman, Vol.7, No.162 (April 5, 1902), p.5 (available on microfilm in the Berkley Library, Trinity College, Dublin).
99. This survey, first published in 1940 by two prominent American social anthropologists, gives a fascinating and thorough insight into the life of a typical rural Irish county in the 1930's. Nearly all aspects of daily life, both commercial and social, are covered and the evidence provides a clear picture of the social situation pervading at that time. The second edition is published by the Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1968.
100. Conrad M. Arensberg and Solon T. Kimball, Family and Community in Ireland (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), p.197.
101. Ibid., p.4.
102. Ibid., p.39.
103. Ibid., p.223.
104. O'Mahony, p.20.
105. Ibid., p.178.
106. F.S.L. Lyons, Ireland Since the Famine (London: Fontana, 1963), p.617.
107. Foster, Modern Ireland, p.522.
108. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Moving the Centre (London: James Curry, 1993), p.95.
109. Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p.27.
110. Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities (London: Verso, 1991

edt.), p.6.

111. Ibid., p.6.

112. An interesting overview of these poets can be found in section 4 of Brendan Kennelly's introduction to The Penguin Book of Irish Verse.

113. ed. Brendan Kennelly, The Penguin Book of Irish Verse (London: Penguin, 1981), p.203.

114. Declan Kiberd in The Crane Bag Book of Irish Studies, Vol. 8., No.1 (1984), p.13.

115. ed. Peter Fallon and Derek Mahon, The Penguin Book of Contemporary Irish Poetry (London: Penguin, 1990), p.xviii.

116. James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (London: Paladin, 1988), p.207.

117. Anderson, p.67.

118. Brady, ed., p.310.

119. Anderson, p.83.

120. Terry Eagleton, Frederick Jameson and Edward Said, Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), p.4.

121. Ibid., p.7.

122. Ibid., p.7.

123. Based on chapter one of David Lodge's Modern Criticism and Theory (London: London, 1988), pp.1-14.

124. Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory (Oxford: Blackwells, 1983), p.97.

125. Ibid., p.97.

126. Richard Kearney, Transitions (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p.17.

127. I interviewed Professor Roy Foster in his rooms at Hertford College, Oxford, on the afternoon of March 20, 1995.

128. Liam Kennedy launches quite an attack on the whole notion of the Irish post-colonial debate in an article entitled 'Modern Ireland - Post-Colonial Society or Post-Colonial Pretensions' in The Irish Review, Vol.13 (Winter 1992/3), pp.107-22.

129. From the same interview quoted above.

130. Antoinette Quinn, Patrick Kavanagh - Born Again Romantic

(Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1991), p.163.

131. For Kavanagh's personal reflections on this general theme see chapter one of Collected Pruse, pp. 11-23.

CHAPTER TWO

IRISH POETRY SINCE THE REVIVAL

2.1 The Celtic Revival : The Cult of the Peasant.

'As we sit on stools on either side of the fire I hear her voice going backwards and forwards in the same sentence from the gaiety of a child to the plaintive intonation of an old race that is worn with sorrow. At one moment she is a simple peasant, at another she seems to be looking out at the world with a sense of prehistoric disillusion and to sum up in the expression of her grey-blue eyes the whole external despondency of the clouds and the sea' (1).

J.M. Synge's portrait of a young girl in his 1907 book The Aran Islands is an excellent example of the portrayal of the Irish peasantry that formed a crucial element of the philosophical foundations of the Celtic/Gaelic revival of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In this image the unsullied simplicity and primitiveness of the peasant is allied to an imagined mystical, prophetic nature of a child apparently capable of the most profound insight into 'an old race that is worn with sorrow'. The simple peasant girl, removed from the implied complexities of urban existence, is depicted as a pure cultural touchstone, at one with both the essential nature and history of her people and an exemplar of the popularly-held proximity of the people of the western seaboard to the intrinsic characteristics of the Irish

people. However, Synge's text also exemplifies the complex perceptions that underpin any concept of a national authenticity in that he regularly acknowledges his cultural distance from the people he trying to present, that he 'cannot talk to them when there is much to say' (2), despite his strong sense of communion with them. He appears simultaneously drawn to, yet irreconcilably different from, the islanders, further emphasising the tone of romantic observation that characterises aspects of the book (3). Counter-balancing the obvious admiration of, and respect for, the island lifestyle is a parallel depiction of a difficult, monotonous, poverty-stricken and weather-beaten existence, marked by a strictly adhered to economic and social routine. In an irony apparently overlooked by Synge, the primitive island lifestyle which he so cherished was chiefly supported by income from departed emigrants in the United States and Britain, thus further complicating and in fact undermining the whole notion of an independent originary peasantry (4). The very authenticity of life on the islands was supported by the economies of countries whose cultures posed, in Synge's mind, the greatest threat to their outwardly autonomous existence, thereby juxtaposing the means of their survival and demise. However, Synge's championing of the romantic aspects of life on the island to the detriment of a more realistic appraisal of the harsh realities is typical of the attitude of the Celtic Revival towards the Irish peasantry. Significantly, most of the revivalists, including Synge [a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, and the Sorbonne (5)] lived a life far removed from that of the ordinary rural labourer. Their attitude towards the peasantry is astutely

captured by Kavanagh in TGH when he describes the 'travellers' (1.669) (6) stopping their cars to peer over the hedge into Maguire's fields:

'There is the source from which all cultures rise,
And all religions,
There is the pool in which the poet dips
And the musician.
Without the peasant base civilisation must die,
Unless the clay is in the mouth the singer's singing is useless.
The traveller's touch the roots of the grass and feel renewed
When they grasp the steering wheels again' (11.671-8).

This heavily ironic depiction of a transient, mobile observation of a peasant tableau is a direct challenge to the revivalists' romanticisation of peasant life, based as it was on external experiences imbued with socio-political undertones. The travellers are safe behind the wheels of cars that were beyond the economic reach of the peasant. TGH subtly reverses the revivalists' emphasis by clearly focusing on the mundane and difficult aspects of peasant life with only occasional references to some form of spiritual escape. Kavanagh engages with the revivalist myth from the inside, cleverly reworking their peasant images from a realistic, knowledgeable perspective, aware of the brutality and ignorance which typified quotidian peasant life. Nonetheless, Synge's portrait of the peasants of Aran exemplifies the cultural nationalism of the Literary Revival, a complex and often contradictory movement neatly summarised by Terence Brown:

'The Irish Literary Revival was a movement that sought to supply the Ireland of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with a sense of its own distinct identity through the medium of the English language. This movement's main writers and thinkers believed that a general awareness of the splendours and riches of a Gaelic literary antiquity and of the residual fires of the Celtic way of life (still burning in rural districts, particularly in the West) would generate a sense of national worth and organic unity, which would give to the political struggle a dignity and purpose it would otherwise lack' (7).

Brown's identification of the importance of the residual Celtic life existing in rural Ireland to the revivalists inevitably placed the peasant at the heart of many revivalist preconceptions of models of Irish identity and established peasant existence as perhaps the most significant cultural icon of the era. Indeed, in Standish O'Grady's seminal 1881 book, entitled History of Ireland, Brown locates what he refers to as 'the dawn of the Irish Literary Revival' (8), a text in which O'Grady describes Ireland's legendary past, harboured in the simple life of the West of Ireland, as 'the imagination of the country' (9) and, crucially, with an importance 'far beyond the tale of actual events and duly recorded deeds' (10). O'Grady significantly emphasises the distancing of the reality of peasant existence from the supposed imagination of the country, implying his and other revivalists' roles in the articulation and even creation of that imagination. By thus separating the 'imagination' of the country from the very people supposed to comprise that

imagination, O'Grady established a precedent that would ultimately lead to the revivalists' perceived ownership of peasant histories and the creation of a class of mute cultural exemplars whose articulation relied upon a socially, economically and educationally advantaged interest group which ultimately allowed Synge to generalise with statements such as 'these people make no distinction between the natural and the supernatural' (11) and 'the half-civilised fisherman of the larger island' (12). It is clearly the visiting author, therefore, rather than the peasants themselves who decide upon a definition of civilisation and it is Synge who surreptitiously places himself at the vanguard of the defence of a life that he never lived, typifying the revivalist defence of a largely alien peasant culture. Similarly, the quotidian reality of peasant life might, upon closer inspection, begin to undermine revivalist images of the purity and spirituality of the Irish people, as indeed happened with the publication of TGH in 1942, and thus the separation of lived reality from 'the imagination of the country' became less a matter of aesthetic choice but more an essential element in the maintenance of the entire revivalist agenda. The danger posed by TGH, therefore, was the corrosive and weakening effect of Kavanagh's bleak imagery upon the invocation of the peasant as, in Richard Kearney's words, 'a potent symbol for reanimating the power of 'dead generations' and restoring a conviction of unbroken continuity with one's tradition' (13).

The revivalist cult of the peasant, however, was beset with contradictions. Synge himself wrote that 'there are sides of all

that western life, the groggy-patriot-publican-general-shop-man who is married to the priest's half-sister and is second cousin once removed of the dispensary doctor, that are horrible and awful' (13). Obviously, the peasants were not expected to attempt to rise above Kavanagh's 'little fields', a process which would inevitably sully their perceived affinity with nature and spiritual innocence. Indeed, it would appear that much of the attraction of the peasant for the revivalists depended upon the perceived resistance offered by peasant culture to the onslaught of an Irish, Catholic middle-class petit-bourgeoisie, who were arguably the greatest threat to the economic and cultural position of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy who provided so many key figures in the revivalist movement. Synge's Aran peasant, therefore, is a good example of Colin Graham's analysis of the Indian Subaltern Group's depiction of the peasant as 'a theoretical site of disempowered purity', becoming in Synge's eyes 'a refuge for cultural and political authenticity' (15). Interestingly, when Synge portrayed the peasantry as a violent, sexually promiscuous and lawless group of people, prepared to accept and even venerate an apparent murderer, in his 1907 play The Playboy of the Western World, it was his urban, middle-class audience that revolted against this depiction of rural disorder. The use of the word 'shifts' (a slip or chemise) in the play apparently brought the Abbey audience to its indignant feet, an audience which, in W.B. Yeats' words, 'wished to silence what they considered a slander upon Ireland's womanhood' (16). The indignation of the audience points to the desire to own peasant reality rather than allow it a vibrant and varied expression.

However, Yeats brilliantly captures the hypocrisy of the apparently enraged theatre-goers in his description of the riot:

'As I stood there watching, knowing well that I saw the dissolution of a school of patriotism that held sway over my youth, Synge came and stood beside me and said, "A young doctor has just told me that he can hardly keep himself from jumping on to a seat, and pointing out in that howling mob those whom he is treating for venereal disease"' (17).

The cult of the peasant was not, of course, limited to the revivalist writings of Synge and Yeats and examples can be found in a variety of sources throughout the nineteenth century. Ernest Renan's influential essay The Poetry of the Celtic Races, for example, which inspired Yeats's later essay The Celtic Element in Literature, describes 'an ancient race living its own life in some obscure islands and peninsulas in the West' (18). Renan also laments the imminent passing of this way of life when he writes of 'the divine tones thus expiring on the horizon before the growing tumult of uniform civilisation', an idea that parallels Synge's description of the threat of economic progress to the Aran way of life. Renan makes some startling claims about Irish peasant culture that Kavanagh indirectly explores in TGH. Renan argues that 'it does not appear that the peoples which form it (the Celtic race) are by themselves susceptible of progress', while the peasants are 'endowed with little initiative', their lives characterised by 'an endless quest after an object ever flying from desire' (19). This anti-materialist, anti-rationalist

perspective of the peasantry is cleverly undermined in TGH when the narrator articulates this Renan-like claiming of the peasant by the onlooking world. The ubiquitous onlooker talks, with heavy irony, of the peasant who 'can talk to God as only Moses and Isaiah talked' (1.667), whilst in the next line the narrator comments that 'the peasant is only one remove from the beasts he drives' (1.668), thus neatly highlighting the inherent contradictions in the glorification of peasant existence notably through the lack of educational opportunities, material possessions and social ambition which have combined to produce an ignorant, inarticulate and unrepresented peasantry and which paradoxically is held to represent all that is closest to the authentic Irish psyche.

While certainly forming an important element in revivalist writings, the revivalists did not suddenly invent such an important literary and cultural icon as the ubiquitous Irish peasant which had been a feature of Irish writing for at least the previous 150 years. In early novels such as William Chaingneau's (1709-1781) The History of Jack Connor (1752) the seemingly contradictory depiction of the peasant, so common in revivalist writings, receives an early airing (20). Chaigneau's peasants appear naturally subservient and 'industriously employ'd in that most ancient and most noble profession of begging' (21). On the other hand, while describing the people's behaviour at a wake, Chaigneau notes that 'I much fear many grand societies are but humble imitators of this equally polite assembly' (22), thus establishing the dualistic detachment that appears to

characterise any literary engagement with such an amorphous, ill-defined and illusive term as 'peasant'. Similarly, in the works of Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849), whose novel Castle Rackrent (1800) played a crucial cultural and literary role in forming popular perceptions of the Irish peasantry (23), Claude Fierobe notes Edgeworth's 'neocolonialist' tendency in which 'it seems to her, there is no need for any profound reform in the social structure of Ireland' (24) despite her honest and often shocking portrayal of appalling rural poverty, starvation and disease. Edgeworth's peasants readily acknowledge the natural rights and superiorities of their Anglo-Irish landlords, their lives characterised, in her words, by a 'mixture of quickness, simplicity, cunning, carelessness, dissipation, disinterestedness, shrewdness and blunder' (25). This naturalisation of the peasant's economic and social conditions fostered an image of a protective, paternalistic Anglo-Irish social elite whose knowledge of the peasantry was the peasantry, who masqueraded stereotypical portrayals of rural Ireland under the guise of an apologetic pseudo-scientific empathetic literature. Indeed, as late as 1909, W.B. Yeats wrote in his autobiography of his desire to 'disguise myself as a peasant and wander through the West' in order to 'combine the greatest possible personal realization with the greatest possible knowledge' (26), thus encapsulating the concept of a tangible, knowable peasant essence, accessible only to the select few who were prepared to undergo 'the greatest possible personal realization' and which was, by implication, denied to the very people held to encapsulate this primitive simplicity. While the

peasant continued to exert a hypnotic influence over important writers such as Lady Morgan (1783-1859), William Carleton (1794-1896) and Lady Gregory (27), it is in the work of Yeats that the most effective and influential peasant mythology begins to emerge and consequently it is important to examine his uneasy and complex relationship with those he simultaneously admired yet whose reality was far removed from his own.

'Folk-art is, indeed, the oldest of the aristocracies of thought, and because it refuses what is passing and trivial, the merely clever and pretty, as certainly as the vulgar and insincere, and because it has gathered into itself the simplest and most unforgettable thoughts of the generations, it is the soil where all great art is rooted' (28).

Yeats' basing of the purist forms of thought on 'folk-art' clearly establishes his concept of the authenticity and cultural significance of peasant culture. Similarly, his grafting of a dislike of 'what is passing' onto the essential character of folk-art distances contemporary experience from an overall image of the genuinely Irish psyche and further establishes him as the important arbiter between the past and the present. Equally, his assertion that 'the ancient farmers and herdsmen were full of love and hatred, and made their friends gods and their enemies the enemies of gods, and those who keep their tradition are not less mythological' (29) allowed him to imbue peasant culture with a remarkable and unquestioned collection of talents and virtues, mystical qualities that 'ascend like medieval genealogies through

unbroken dignities to the beginning of the world' (30). Peasant culture, clearly, is depicted as the saviour of the present through its preservation of the past. From clairvoyance to encounters with spirits and ghosts, Yeats' peasant eschews the fads of contemporary life for a closer experience of an apparently richer, more fulfilling heritage. However, traces of internal peasant hierarchies begin to appear when Yeats writes in The Celtic Twilight that 'To the wise peasant, the green hills and woods round him are full of never-fading mystery' because 'the pagan powers are not far off' (31). Clearly there are wise peasants and not so wise peasants, the former being the valued object of Yeats' admiration, and powers of creation, while the latter remain unspoken and unvoiced. Indeed, the bizarre and contradictory nature of much of Yeats' writing on peasant culture is typified in the claim he makes in the same essay that 'in a society that has cast out imaginative tradition, only a few people - three or four thousand out of millions - favoured by their own characters and by happy circumstance, have understanding of imaginative things' (32). His arbitrary selection of a few thousand 'favoured' people appears to contradict his expressed belief in On the Boiler (1939) that 'clairvoyance, prevision, and allied gifts, rare among the educated classes, are common amongst peasants' (33). He fails to substantiate these claims other than to recount the folk-tales of his native Sligo. There are, of course, in his other writings, clues to his inconsistency over the nature and cultural importance of the peasant. In 1910, for example, in an essay entitled 'J.M. Synge and the Ireland of his Time', Yeats wrote

that Thomas Davis, one of the leaders of the Young Ireland movement in the 1840's, 'understood that a country must show its young men images for the affection, although they be but diagrams of what should be or may be' (34), suggesting that important cultural icons should be depicted for the national good, however that is defined, rather than for the inherent actuality, a point which places his peasant depictions in a more understandable light. Yeats argued that the Young Irelanders 'imagined the Soldier, the Orator, the Patriot, the Poet, the Chieftain, and above all the Peasant' (35), thus neatly justifying his often outlandish claims for the supernatural powers of the Irish peasantry in terms of the moral well-being of his fellow citizens. Importantly, Yeats stresses that the process involves the imagining of the peasant rather than what 'they should be or may be' (36), a process in which the poetic imagination becomes the lens through which social, cultural and political history is viewed. The problem with such a perspective is the inevitable distortion that such a lens will create, producing, in Seamus Deane's words, 'versions of history converted into metaphor which has a bearing that is largely aesthetic and stylistic' (37), a crucial point that will be dealt with in detail in the next section of this chapter.

There are some interesting parallels to be drawn between the revivalist images of the Irish peasant and Edward Said's discussion of European attitudes towards the East in Orientalism and a brief examination of the latter will shed some important theoretical light on the former. In the context of British

imperial policy in Egypt, Said notes that 'knowledge and power' (38) constituted two basic principles of the process of colonial domination, a subjective knowledge of the indigenous people allied to the economic and military power of the imperial machine. Said writes that 'the object of such knowledge is inherently vulnerable to scrutiny; this object is a "fact" which, if it develops, changes, or otherwise transforms itself in the way that civilisations frequently do, nevertheless is fundamentally stable' (39). In terms of revivalist images of the Irish peasant, Said's comments provide a valid critique of the nomenclature utilised by Synge, Yeats and others when describing the rural life that they came into contact with. The peasant becomes an object of research, imbued with qualities perceived by the observers but hardly aware of their apparent innate talents. Indeed, the knowledge of peasant culture acquired by Synge, Yeats and Hyde gave them crucial power as the self-appointed guardians, interpreters and receptors of that culture. When Synge, for example, notes the 'sense of prehistoric disillusion' in the voice of the singing peasant girl, it could be argued that this sense of disillusion originates more from his psyche than from the girl's and it expresses his need to experience a deeper sense of personal identity than he has hitherto been capable of. Indeed, Said points to the crux of the issue when he notes that 'to have knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it' (40). It can certainly be said that there is an air of superiority in much revivalist writing, with the peasantry being constantly advised as to their cultural well-being without the opportunity of a meaningful

reply. It could be argued that the peasantry, in Said's words, 'exists, in a sense, as we know it' (41) rather than the actuality, a point exemplified by Douglas Hyde in his 1892 essay The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland. Hyde wrote:

'I knew fifteen Irish workmen who were working in a haggard in England give up talking Irish amongst themselves because the English farmer laughed at them. And yet O'Connell used to call us the 'finest peasantry in Europe'. Unfortunately, he took little care that we should remain so' (42).

Hyde's complete disregard for the difficult social reality faced by Irish emigrants in Britain and his condemnation of them for speaking English typifies the combination of admiration and disgust that characterises much of his and other revivalist writing. In this image, the peasantry are depicted as culturally moribund, collaborating with the colonial regime by speaking the language of the coloniser yet curiously retaining strange restorative powers in terms of Irish culture. Hyde, like many other prominent revivalists, observes from a distance, exhorting others to retain a cultural identity from which he seems curiously and uncomfortably removed. To paraphrase Said, Hyde's knowledge of the peasantry is the peasantry for Hyde, regardless of the social and cultural reality faced by them. This duality is also found in the writings of other revivalists, such as Yeat's 'Hopes and Fears for Irish Literature' (1892) in which he laments 'the most dreadful intermixture of the commonplace' (43) in Irish poetry while simultaneously exhorting all things 'Gaelic

and Irish', basing a future Irish cultural renaissance firmly on a folk literature he perceived as founded on 'heroic life'. His argument that poetry 'has nothing to do with life' but is a valid artistic creation in itself further removes lived experience from the stated intention of delivering 'that new great utterance for which the world is waiting' (44). Again, in Yeats' writings, there is the strong impression of an implied artistic ownership of a 'history full of lofty passions' rather than an acknowledgement of a ravaged peasantry who in reality were decimated by a gross emigration of over 4,750,000 people between 1841 and 1925 (45), which is hardly a statistic to support the contention of a glorious but forgotten past. Yeats typifies the uneasy and contradictory relationship between the revivalists and the peasantry. His memoirs are full of references to naive 'country people' (46) while 'the beauty of peasant thought comes partly from its naturalness, from its being unspoiled by this artificial townmade thought' (47), words strongly resonant of Edward Said's analysis of certain British colonial attitudes towards Egypt and Egyptians. Yeats cherishes the 'legends I find so plentiful in the West' (48) yet blandly notes that Synge 'had wandered over much of Europe, listening to stories in the Black Forest, making friends with servants and with poor people, and this from an aesthetic interest, for he gathered no statistics, had no money to give, and cared nothing for the wrongs of the poor' (49), an observation that could quite easily tally with his own perspective on the Irish peasantry. Patrick Kavanagh astutely noted this apparent contradiction:

'Yeats took up Ireland and made it his myth and his theme. And you can see him today standing in the centre of that myth, uneasy that he doesn't fully belong' (50).

The central purpose of the revivalists' doctrine, therefore, was the identification of what they perceived to be the authentic, rural Celtic roots of Irish identity, translated into contemporary politics to counter what Terence Brown refers to as 'the sectarian, exclusivist, democratic and collectivist doctrines of Irish Ireland and modern Irish political nationalism' (51). The rural peasant was identified as the supreme literary image around which the true Irish imagination and spirit could be maintained and preserved, as Pat Sheeran and Nina Witoszek note : 'those who had nothing were presented as those who had ultimately what was most worth having - soul, imagination, simplicity, nobility' (52). The consequences of this idealisation were felt in many aspects of social, cultural, political and literary life in Ireland. Terence Brown notes that the revivalists 'celebrated a version of Irish pastoral, with an expression of an ancient civilisation, uncontaminated by commercialism and progress. In doing so, they helped to confirm Irish society in a belief that rural life constituted an essential element of an unchanging Irish identity' (53). The importance of peasant iconography cannot be understated and can be found not only in the writings of such important political figures as Padraig Pearse and Eamon de Valera but is also located in popular images of the Irish countryside in postcards produced by John Hinde (1916-) (54), whose images of an unspoilt peasantry

were posted around the world by visiting emigrants. Indeed, Hinde's hugely popular postcards of rural Ireland, of which millions were sold in the late 1950's [by 1972 John Hinde Ltd. was selling 50 million postcards a year (55)], were the ideal visual accompaniment to the pastoral images of Ireland being pedalled by de Valera and others and they indicate the persuasiveness and effectiveness of such images of Ireland on popular perceptions of the country both at home and abroad. Postcards such as 'Collecting Turf from the Bog, Connemara, Co. Galway, Ireland' (Appendix Two, fig.1) portrayed an almost biblical simplicity, with the ubiquitous red-headed, freckle-faced children collecting the most basic of domestic fuel with the most basic of transport. Encapsulated in this postcard is the timelessness of a successful pastoral image, indicating a country resistant to change and harbouring traditional values based around the family. It could also be argued that this image represents a partial summation of what could be termed de Valera's imagined community. Hinde's first postcards appeared as late as 1957 and already a perceptible change in attitude towards de Valerian pastorality can be detected as Hinde himself noted in the differing reactions to perhaps his best known card:

'This picture represented the Ireland the visitors looked for, and it did exist. There was a certain resistance to that kind of image of Ireland. About three or four years after we started producing postcards Bord Failte (Irish Tourist Board) discouraged the use of pictures of cottages or donkeys because the government regarded them as symbols of a backward country. The things they

wanted portrayed were skyscrapers. The government then didn't realise that the attraction of Ireland to visitors was completely the opposite' (56).

Hinde's interesting observations on outside perceptions of Ireland take little if no account of the economic and social reality of the country. He points to the unwillingness of visitors to engage with the reality of Irish life, what Kavanagh refers to in TGH as the facile renewal felt by 'travellers' when they observe Maguire labouring in his fields before 'they grasp the steering wheels again' (1.678). The travellers are unwilling to engage with the reality of the difficult life experienced in rural Ireland and wish to believe the images so successfully created by Yeats, de Valera and, in turn, Hinde. In fact, the bogus nature of many of these images is strangely admitted by Hinde in his comments on another of his well known postcards, 'Fisherman on the Aran Islands, Co.Galway, Ireland' (Appendix Two, fig.2). Hinde disarmingly comments:

'Aran Island- I flew in and was there about ten days. I can't remember the full details of the picture where the fisherman's mending his nets but I remember telling them what I wanted and I was very disappointed when the currach carriers turned up on the Sunday morning with their suits on. They'd come straight from church. I wanted them to turn up in their wellies and their sea-going gear. And then I said to the fisherman, well you've got to be wearing an Aran sweater. Nobody had an Aran sweater on Aran. Eventually they found one and it was miles too small for him and

had a hole in it. That's why he posed like this to cover up its smallness' (57)

Here is startling proof of the inauthentic nature of this particular postcard which is all the more significant as the photograph was taken on one of Synge's prized Aran Islands. Hinde's frank admission that the photograph was manufactured to conform to a preconceived notion of the nature of island life indicates just how removed from social reality many images of the Irish peasantry were. It is ironically comical that no-one on Aran had an Aran sweater and it is indicative of the changes that characterised island life as the 1960's progressed. In Hinde's photographs there is a visual and tangible expression of de Valerian Ireland, despite the fact that the images themselves, by their creator's admission, were as much a fabrication as the Ireland they were attempting to depict. Hinde's cards and his candid descriptions of their composition serve as timely visual representations of the often illusory nature of Irish peasant imagery and the desire to perpetuate images of rural Ireland which would tally not only with revivalist iconography but which, according to Luke Gibbons, 'were more redolent of memory and desire than of the grey realities which characterised everyday life in Ireland (58)'. While it would be wrong to expect a searing social critique from a genre designed to idealise, Hinde's postcards nonetheless indicate the importance and popularity of rural images in the depiction of Irish cultural life. Indeed, Clare Cryan indicates Hinde's intentions with this astute observation:

'He was very certain, not that he thought his photography was artistically wonderful but that it was exactly what the market needed. It seemed to me to be arrogant at the time to be sure that you knew exactly what people wanted. But he did and at the time he was right, they did want idealised pictures with overblown colour. He had a puritan ideal, a bit like de Valera with his sweet maidens and comely lads dancing at the crossroads, that sort of thing' (59).

Similarly, John Ford's classic 1952 film, 'The Quiet Man' (60), in which a returned 'Yank', Sean Thornton (John Wayne), finds Arcadian Ireland alive and well in the West, did much to engrain the image of a thatched cottaged pastorality on a huge Irish-American public thus further embedding contemporary Ireland in a shroud of nostalgia. However, this perspective was challenged and ultimately unmasked in the work of writers exploring different interpretations of Ireland's complex post-colonial identity who debunked what Kavanagh referred to as 'the synthetic Irish thing' (561). In the pages of TGH, Kavanagh relentlessly chipped away at the Yeatsian peasant edifice and consequently emerged as a vital and influential post-Revival figurehead. Seamus Deane writes:

'But of course the great de-mythologiser, the man who has most deeply influenced contemporary Irish poetry, was Patrick Kavanagh, who repudiated the very idea of the Irish Revival and with that, all its rhetoric of power, suasion and possession. Instead he sought to know the ordinary; and having done so,

discovered that it was also the miraculous' (62).

3.2 The Counter-Revival : The Peasant Unmasked.

The glamorisation of the peasant by the revivalists, and the consequent separation of the aesthetic from real experience, could not have been further removed from the social and economic reality faced by the vast majority of Irish people in the early decades of independence. This is perhaps one of the principal reasons why many writers in the 1930's and 1940's began to write, according to Frank O'Connor in Horizon in 1942, 'with some idea of replacing the subjective, idealistic, romantic literature of Yeats, Lady Gregory and Synge', acknowledging that 'we, have, I think, reached the end of a period' (63). O'Connor's call for writers to 'be done with romanticism for the next twenty years or so and let satire have its way' (64) indicated a mood in which the nature and function of the rural peasant, in cultural and literary terms, was to be reinterpreted in a harsher, more realistic, and indeed comic (65) light. Kavanagh's TGH was an important text in the emergence of a literature in which personal experience, grounded in the local, began to be accepted as legitimate and fruitful literary material. Consequently, Peter Fallon and Derek Mahon claim that 'more than MacNeice, more than Yeats, Kavanagh may be seen as the true origin of much Irish poetry today' (66), a strong testament to the success of the move away from the dominant images of the revival towards a more disparate, localised, parochial and self-critical literary culture.

The revivalist images of the Irish peasantry could not have been further removed from Kavanagh's caustic critique, not only of aspects of rural life, but of those who sought to make such a life their literary and cultural ideal. Writing in his Self-Portrait in 1964 Kavanagh, recalling his early days in Dublin in the 1940's, noted that 'in those days in Dublin the big thing, besides being Irish, was peasant quality. They were all trying to be peasants. They had been at it for years but I hadn't heard' (67). He describes the 'evil aegis of the so-called Irish literary movement' under whose influence he had written a 'so-called biography', Tarry Flynn, in 1938, as a result of which he was 'installed as the authentic peasant, and what an idea that was amongst rascals pretending to have an interest in poetry' (68). This stinging indictment of the revivalists certainly began to erode images of peasant authenticity and indeed Kavanagh strongly hints at a duplicitous attempt to create a peasant ideal by people who were more interested in their own self-aggrandisement and the creation of a peasant myth in which they become the arbiters of authenticity. In fact, Kavanagh proceeds to argue that the 'so-called Irish Literary Movement which purported to be frightfully Irish and racy of the Celtic soil was a thoroughgoing English-bred lie', and that the real audience for much revivalist writing was either English or American, a theme explored by Luke Gibbons in his interesting essay 'The Myth of the West in Irish and American Culture' (69). Kavanagh's description of a peasant stands in his Self-Portrait in stark contrast to popular revivalist imagery:

'Although the literal idea of a peasant is of a farm labouring person, in fact a peasant is all that mass of mankind that lives below a certain level of consciousness. They live in the dark cave of the unconscious and they scream when they see the light. They take offence easily, their degree of insultability is very great' (70).

The repressed miseries of the peasant, either ignored in the grand national narratives of the revivalists or perceived as noble anti-materialist virtues, became the central focus of TGH. Kavanagh spearheaded the post-colonial criticism originating from within the Free State itself, becoming what could be termed an 'internal outsider', by representing those Irish writers who, directly and indirectly, challenged the narrow cultural and social horizons perpetuated by church and state. It is precisely in this environment that TGH achieves its critical relevance. The poem challenged the popular perception of the peasant and exploded the myth of de Valera's 'cosy homesteads', famously expounded in his St. Patrick's Day address of 1943 (71). Kavanagh replaced de Valera's ubiquitous 'comely maidens' with Maguire's 'sinning over the warm ashes' (l.497) and 'the romping of sturdy children' with Agnes's 'unwanted womb' (l.310). Through his uncompromising imagery Kavanagh depicted a rural world at odds with the revivalist model of rural authenticity.

Terence Brown argues that 'Ireland's post-colonial identity was being fashioned 'in a celebration of a rigidly defined national essence' (72) and it was precisely against this form of

provincialism that writers such as Patrick Kavanagh, George Russell (pseudonym AE) and Sean O'Faolain worked. Joe Lee appositely assesses the illusory nature of many aspects of social, cultural and political life in post-independence Ireland:

'The censorship legislation served the materialistic values of the propertied classes by fostering the illusion that Ireland was a haven of virtue surrounded by a sea of vice. It provided a convenient facade behind which a fabricated but reassuring self-image of moral probity could emerge' (73).

Amongst the main ideological challenges to the church/state hegemony were the journals and literary magazines that attracted those disaffected and dislocated writers who, though ostensibly a-political, felt that the post-colonial vision of the Irish state as presented by church and state was too limited and indeed too limiting. AE (74), a poet and journalist who had earlier in his career joined W.B Yeats in the Theosophical Society, edited an influential magazine called The Irish Statesman from 1923 to 1930. AE was an inspirational figure in Dublin literary circles and later, in 1930, helped Patrick Kavanagh by publishing some of his poetry (75). The Irish Statesman combined new poetry, short stories and drama with articles on socialism, workers rights and the new state's perceived betrayal of the idealism that preceded its creation. In an editorial dated December, 1928, AE noted that 'the next generation will be intellectual rather than idealistic' and that 'the idealists in literature and politics are becoming realists' who will oppose those who 'are

now militant about books, newspapers, cinemas, short skirts, dances, which they would like to suppress' (76). AE's identification of realism as the dominant intellectual and literary mood appears to prepare the way for Kavanagh's TGH, one of the most important and 'realistic' poems to emerge in the first decades of the Free State.

AE was an influential figure in Kavanagh's personal and poetic development. In The Green Fool Kavanagh describes his reaction to The Irish Statesman, a paper he first discovered in a Dundalk shop in 1927 (77):

'On that day the saints of Ireland, political and theological, lost a strong supporter. I never wrote for the holy poets again' (78).

Despite its closure on April 12, 1930, almost inevitably as the result of a libel action, The Irish Statesman had, in Peter Kavanagh's words, 'lasted long enough to unlock the door of the literary world for Patrick' (79). AE published many of Kavanagh's poems and 'went around telling his friends how he had discovered a poet' (80). Kavanagh walked to Dublin in 1930 to meet AE who 'gave Patrick a load of books, Emerson, Melville, Dostoyevsky, Whitman, James Stephens, Liam O'Flaherty, Frank O'Connor and many others' (81). Kavanagh described his reaction to AE's death in a letter to his sister on October 8, 1935, as 'a sore loss; he was the best friend the young writers of Ireland ever had' (82). Russell's influence on Kavanagh was significant in that he not

only provided a practical and occasionally financially rewarding outlet for the young poet's work, but in his defence of the right to oppose the dominant state perception of national identity he would almost certainly have influenced Kavanagh's intellectual development. Terence Brown sums up AE's significance thus:

'In his columns we see the emergence in modern Ireland of the writer as social critic, as attentive to economic theory and practice as he is to aesthetic doctrine. In this conception, the writer must serve almost as an opposition political party, constantly challenging the monolithic assumptions of the prevailing social consensus' (83).

Terence Brown points to the emergence, in the early decades of the Free State, of a literary opposition to the church and state domination of political and social life. Magazines and newspapers, including AE's The Irish Statesman, Sean O'Faolain's The Bell (84) and Patrick and Peter Kavanagh's Kavanagh's Weekly (85) offered a vital and challenging perspective on the progress of the new state that inevitably fell foul of the Censorship Board. While these journals promoted new writers and published many of Kavanagh's early poems, their editorials and articles were overtly political and tackled the Free State government over a variety of issues, from financial and economic policies to neutrality in the Second World War. For example, in an interesting letter from the Office of the Censor to the editor of The Bell, Sean O'Faolain, on December 6th, 1943, the government's barely concealed paranoia over foreign policy can

be clearly seen:

'In practice, we are reluctant to allow anything to be published in this country which might be used by the anti-Irish press abroad to misrepresent and discredit the attitude of this government and people towards the war or to suggest that we in this country are so ill-informed that we really don't know what is going on in the world' (86).

The Office of the Censor, while ostensibly concerning itself with military and foreign news, also kept a close eye on literature that might be considered 'immoral' under the terms of the Censorship of Publications Act, 1929, and it was not long before the poetry of Patrick Kavanagh, and TGH in particular, came under scrutiny, although this will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. One of the effects of war censorship was the creation of a much larger Dublin-based censorship office whose remit extended to the very boundaries of what could be considered the national interest. From an early stage Patrick Kavanagh contributed articles to The Bell and other journals on a wide variety of subjects, including the state of the national literature to a poem in November, 1947, entitled 'The Wake of the Books' in which the Censorship Board is described as :

'The inarticulate envy and the spleen
Echoing in the incidental scene' (87).

This collection of writers and editors, who were prepared to

defy, or at least challenge the power of the censor, formed a vital nucleus of opposition to the contemporary church/state hegemony. The debate surrounding Irish national identity hinted at a society unwilling to view itself in its entirety, happier to indulge in what Kavanagh referred to as 'the Ireland invented and patented by Yeats, Lady Gregory and Synge' (88) in which a poet is regarded as 'either an uproarious, drunken, clown, an inspired idiot, a silly school-girl type, or just plain dull' (89). Kavanagh, Sean O'Faolain, Frank O'Connor, Brian O'Nolan [alias Flann O'Brien (1911-66)] and others attempted to highlight the faults and contradictions inherent in Irish society and as such produced the first post-colonial social critique of the new state. Theirs was a critical perception of Irish identity, a debunking of the revivalist myths and a critique of the isolationist, introspective and xenophobic nature of the Free State, and a significant and effective attempt to provide, in O'Connor's words, an 'idealistic opposition' (90). The intense cultural and political activity of the thirty years before independence did not yield the sort of state that so many of the participants had visualised. This was perhaps an inevitable consequence of the post-colonial era, characterised by the narrow cultural and social orthodoxies adopted by those unused to political power. Novelist John Banville describes the situation thus:

'The republic which he (de Valera) founded, with the aid and encouragement of John Charles Mc Quaid (Archbishop of Dublin), was unique: a demilitarised totalitarian state in which the lives

of its citizens were to be controlled not by a system of coercive force and secret policing, but by a kind of applied spiritual paralysis maintained by an unofficial federation between the Catholic clergy, the judiciary and the civil service. Essential to this policy was the policy of intellectual isolationism which de Valera imposed upon the country' (91).

Much of Kavanagh's prose writings concern criticism of what he perceived as the duplicitous nature of those entrusted to govern the country. He felt that various governments were happy to allow hundreds of thousands of Irish citizens to emigrate to Britain and the U.S. while paying lip service to the rights of workers (92). What particularly annoyed Kavanagh was the lack of conviction he perceived at the heart of the Irish people. Far from the rural idyll of the revivalists, Kavanagh wrote in 1952:

'The questions we never ask ourselves in Ireland are: Do we believe in anything? Do we care for anything?' (93).

Interestingly, he proceeds to reflect on what he saw as his role in this questioning process:

'If the answer is 'Yes' we must then ask why therefore is a man who is eager to discuss and reflect upon serious subjects considered bad news and box office poison ?' (94).

This comment from the final editorial of Kavanagh's Weekly points to the disillusionment experienced by Kavanagh while eking out

a living in Dublin. Throughout his life he was unable, or perhaps unwilling, to hold down a full time job. Various newspapers, as diverse as the overtly Catholic The Standard to The Farmer's Journal offered Kavanagh piecemeal work reviewing films, attending pilgrimages or football matches or producing a diary of events in Dublin. It is debateable whether he deliberately closed doors on himself by attacking the sacred cows of Irish society or whether, as he himself wrote, he was avoided by those with the gift of employment because he was too eager to confront and reflect upon serious issues. At the very least he rarely attempted to hide his views and there can be little doubt that his contemporaries were well aware of his stance on a variety of issues. The title of the editorial of the first Kavanagh's Weekly, published on April 12, 1952, was entitled 'Victory of Mediocrity' and in it Kavanagh articulated in prose what he had implied in TGH a decade earlier:

'Can any of these people who presume to be our leaders and voices be hurt in any way except through the pocket? There is no central passion' (95).

This comment parallels Kavanagh's early description of Maguire's dearth of passion in TGH:

'Watch him, watch him, that man on a hill whose spirit
Is a wet sack flapping about the knees of time.
He lives that his little fields may stay fertile when his own
body

Is spread in the bottom of a ditch under two coulters crossed in Christ's Name' (96).

It was out of such a questioning climate that TGH was written. Kavanagh undoubtedly wrote from the firm conviction that the truth, however subjective it may be, is the ultimate arbiter of events. While his brother Peter has claimed that Patrick had no political purpose or hidden agenda (97), this thesis argues that TGH is an implicitly if not explicitly political poem in that it was and is a formative work in the whole counter-revival movement and it is in this context, and in the development of post-colonial Irish poetry, that the poem must be considered. By articulating the unspoken voice of Patrick Maguire, Kavanagh was destroying the myth of the peasant, a myth that had sustained Irish nationalism for centuries. Seamus Deane, in his introduction to Nationalism, Colonialism and Culture, notes that 'all nationalisms have a metaphysical dimension, for they are all driven by an ambition to realise their intrinsic essence in some specific and tangible form' (98) and certainly the peasant was a central figure in the tangible expression of Irish nationalism. TGH was an essential step in the attempted deconstruction of an accepted Irish model of identity which was central to the political and social policies of various post-1922 governments, most obviously manifested in the political philosophies of Eamon de Valera. TGH is a classic example of the implicit 'demolition' that Deane identifies as crucial to the unearthing of a new national identity:

'In the attempted discovery of its "true" identity, a community often begins with the demolition of the false stereotypes within which it has been entrapped. This is an intricate process, since the stereotypes are successful precisely because they have been interiorized' (99).

One of the reasons why the revivalists's peasant imagery was so vehemently undermined by Kavanagh and others was the startling lack of social, economic and cultural realism that characterised their observations of peasant life. Indeed, Yeats never claimed to be an accurate chronicler of peasant existence, a point emphasised by Denis Donoghue which describes 'Yeats's first notion of Symbolism effecting a blessed release from time, from the "malady of the quotidian", that it enables a poet to emigrate to happier lands, fictive places responsive to desire and imagination' (100). Here reality here is depicted as actually undermining revivalist symbolism and perhaps it is in this area of a realistic appraisal of Irish life that the counter-revival writers achieved their critical importance. Another difficulty for those writers attempting to move beyond the Yeatsian domination of peasant symbolism was the difficulty in arriving at an accurate definition of peasant typologies. Were Yeats' peasants small landowners, tenant farmers or migratory labourers? Indeed, the more Yeatsian peasant symbolism is examined, the more representative gaps begin to appear and the more removed from reality the whole revivalist agenda appears. Similarly, because the revivalists looked to an indefinite historical period for their peasant nirvana it remains difficult to identify accurately

a group of people who might readily be defined as peasants. Indeed, the Irish peasantry was a complex socio-economic structure with many internal hierarchies (101), such as small landholders and owners, tenant farmers and landless labourers, whose socio-economic boundaries were constantly being altered and influenced by factors such as the commercialisation and modernisation of agriculture, a slow but perceptible industrialisation, urbanisation, emigration and a general transformation in the system of land ownership. In TGH, Maguire is acutely aware of his position in this rural hierarchy, dreaming in the pub 'from his lowly position of rising to a professorship like Larry Mc Kenna or Duffy or the pig-gelder Nallon whose knowledge was amazing' (1.447-9), an observation that highlights Kavanagh's sensitivities towards the complex yet almost pathetic social conditions that impair Maguire's self-perception (102). Cormac Ó'Gráda's comprehensive economic history of Ireland reveals that in the early decades of the 19th century the Poor Enquiry of 1835-6 investigated and discovered an 'impression of abject pervasive poverty' (103) especially amongst the bottom third or so of the population and a marked increase in poverty on the western fringes. However, the unrelenting picture of poor, starving peasants occupying the western seaboard of Ireland is challenged by unusual and rarely aired facts such as the relatively high life expectancy of the pre-famine population and the slight advantage enjoyed by the average Irish male over his English counterpart in terms of height (+0.2 on an index of 100 from 1780-1850) (104). This leads O'Gráda to conclude that 'well-being in pre-famine Ireland exceeded that in

several other economies' and that 'Irish poverty was a more complex matter' (105) than the majority of historians were prepared to admit. Consequently, simplistic definitions of the Irish peasantry fail to appreciate the necessary complex strata that compose such a large group of people. What Kavanagh offered in TGH was a microcosm of one man's life and what inferences are to be drawn from this life are left to the individual reader.

While these statistics focus only on a period before the cataclysmic events of the Great Famine of 1845-51, O'Grada's conclusions have serious consequences for contemporary perceptions of revivalist peasant imagery and tend to add to the critical importance of texts such as TGH as indicators of the underlying tensions and complexities that marked life for the poorer strata of Irish society. The revivalist peasant was marked, perhaps most notably in Synge's Aran books, by an anti-materialist simplicity born out of a close social communion with the surrounding natural world. This antimaterialism manifested itself, as already alluded to, in a perceived spirituality more in tune with previous Celtic inhabitants rather than any tangible contemporary grouping, a process which led Yeats to advise Irish poets to 'scorn the sort now growing up All out of shape from toe to top, Their unremembering hearts and heads, Base-born products of base beds' (106), indicating his irritated impatience with those who failed to share in his retrospective eulogies. His appeal to 'cast your mind on other days' negates the present and hints at a deep mistrust over the possible consequences of change in rural life, a belief shared by many disparate groups in Irish

society, as Theodore Hoppen points out:

'A strong ruralism was shared by landlords, priests, romantic nationalists, and men of letters, and constituted a unifying thread amidst many splinterings in Irish life' (107).

This ruralism was shattered in TGH as Kavanagh explored the greed, frustration and endemic desire for social, cultural and economic change that characterised the people of Donaghmoyne. In fact, the complexion of rural Ireland had altered radically in the hundred years prior to TGH, reflected in the striking fact that the rural population declined from 5.5 million in 1841 (1 million urban) to 1.5 million in 1961 (1.3 million urban) (108), and this is indicative of the almost exclusively rural nature of Ireland's dramatic population decrease, a demographic change that had serious consequences for the nature of rural life and which gradually increased the economic and political influence of urban Ireland. Interestingly, these figures also show a relatively stable urban population, indicating a widespread rural emigration and only a marginal migration to the urban centres. The economic pressures of rural existence, virtually ignored in revivalist writings, form a central theme in TGH, indicating a life marked out by a dawn to dusk ritual of mundane, physically exhausting tasks and a labour that acts as an intellectual and emotional drain on those compelled to work the land. Maguire and his neighbours are capable of the occasional Yeatsian moment of spiritual insight but it is from a base of physical and emotional emptiness where even the mildest form of distraction, in whatever

form, is an enhancement that can relieve the monotony of quotidian existence.

Kavanagh was not alone, of course, in his attempt at a revised perspective on one of the most important symbols of what Sean O'Faolain referred to as 'the cult of the gael' (109). In a vibrant collection of plays, poems, novels, editorials and articles, a group of Irish writers sought to shift the literary and cultural focus of the new state towards the uncharted territory of a post-Yeatsean realism in which the most obvious intellectual feature was the absence of an over-arching ideology and the emergence of the local and parochial as important cultural and literary sources. The chief tool of these writers appeared to be a biting satirical attack not only on the remnants of the revival but equally on the post-independence socio-political climate which had failed, in their opinion, to reap the potential benefits of the brave new world of independence. The work of Brian O'Nolan (1911-66), alias Flann O'Brien and Myles na Gopaleen, typified the ironic tone of much of the literature of the counter-revival. Equally contemptuous of the pretensions of the revivalist heroic era and of the Free State cultural stasis, O'Nolan was a bi-lingual journalist and novelist whose clever linguistic parodies highlighted the actual over-lapping of language that was a common occurrence throughout Ireland and he was acutely aware of the complex socio-political climate that independence had brought about. In his 1941 novel The Poor Mouth (written originally in Irish as An Beal Bocht), for example, he typifies the ironic detachment that characterised the peasants

reactions to the avidness of Gaelic scholars roaming the Irish countryside in a Synge-like search for cultural authenticity:

'They carried away much of our good Gaelic when they departed from us each night but they left pennies as recompense to the paupers who waited for them and had kept the Gaelic tongue alive for such as them a thousand years. People found this difficult to understand; it had always been said that accuracy of Gaelic (as well as holiness of spirit) grew in proportion to one's lack of worldly goods and since we had the choicest poverty and calamity, we did not understand why the scholars were interested in any half-awkward, perverse gaelic which was audible in other parts' (110).

O'Nolan's parodies, amongst the best known being At Swim-Two-Birds (1939) were, in Terence Brown's words, 'perhaps the most damning indictment of post-independence Ireland in the period' (111), highlighting the sense of inertia and nihilism felt by those writers faced with the social conservatism that marked the new state. The challenge was not to create a mythology to replace what Sean O'Faolain called 'fanciful Celtophilism' (112) but rather to face contemporary Irish life with a more authentic and less value-laden perspective. Samuel Beckett (1907-89), in a 1934 essay entitled 'Recent Irish Poetry', described the revivalist poets 'delivering with the altitudinous complacency of the Victorian Gael the Ossianic goods' (113), and he criticised Yeats and other revivalist poets for 'a flight from self-awareness'. Beckett identified what he refers to as the 'tradition'

underpinning revivalist poetry, namely 'that the first condition of any poem is an accredited theme, and that in self-perception there is no theme, but at best sufficient vis a tergo (a force operating from behind) to land the practitioner into the correct scenery, where the self is either most happily obliterated or else so improved and enlarged that it can be mistaken for part of the decor' (114). Again there is a call for a poetry based on the ordinary theme of self, shrugging off the claustrophobic and monolithic influence of the Celtic revival, what Beckett referred to as 'segment after segment of cut-and-dried sanctity and loveliness' (115). He notes of revivalist poetry that 'at the centre there is no theme' while extolling the 'virtues of a verse that shall be nudist', an appeal for an uncluttered poetic that was to find a vital expression in TGH. Beckett's echoing of O'Connor's plea for realism to have its way further emphasises the important shift in direction attempted by the counter-revivalists, however disparate, fractured and unconnected many of the new voices appeared to be. George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), writing in 1928, argued that Ireland could only progress by 'forcing' itself to 'face new ideas' (116), ironically noting that at the precise moment of political independence 'we rushed to enslave ourselves' through the adoption of ultra conservative social and political policies. Therefore, it is important to note that the counter-revival writers were, in reality, reacting against two cultural orthodoxies. The first was the cult of the peasant and the dominance of Celtic mythology in terms of acceptable poetic subject matter. The second was the overwhelmingly conservative and restrictive society initiated by

successive Free State governments. It was against these twin tyrannies that poems such as TGH sought a vital expression.

2.3 Conclusion.

No one perspective on the nature of the Irish psyche, be it the romantic pastoralism of de Valera, the Celtic mysticism of Yeats or the pragmatic utilitarianism of the counter revivalists ever achieved a cultural hegemony. Rather they exist as a compound of contrasting cultural ideologies, variously influencing contemporary perceptions of Irish identity. Richard Kearney has astutely noted:

'There is no unitary master narrative of Irish cultural history, but a plurality of transitions between different perspectives. Moreover, this very plurality is perhaps our greatest asset, something to be celebrated rather than censored' (117).

Certainly the counter revival marked an important moment of transition between what Peter Fallon and Derek Mahon call the 'Everest' of Yeats' 'pursuit of a new national identity' and 'the single-handed permission' offered by Kavanagh 'for Irish poets to trust and cultivate their native ground and experience' (118). Commenting on the work of Roman Jakobson, Terry Eagleton has noted that 'the history of literature forms a system, in which at any given point some forms and genres are 'dominant' while others are subordinate' (119) and he argues that the moment of transition involves a process of 'defamiliarisation' in which the

dominant literature becomes stale and hackneyed and is challenged and ultimately replaced by a previously subordinate genre. This theory mirrors that actuality of events in the development of a post-Yeatsian literary genre in Ireland in the 1940's and onwards, brought about principally by the counter-revivalists and in particular TGH's demythologisation of the Irish peasant who is perhaps the most important literary icon of the era. However, it would be wrong to over-simplify the complexities inherent in this period as there was, in fact, a good deal of cultural and intellectual over-lapping between the revivalists and those who sought to distance themselves from the former's literary and cultural agenda. Indeed, it could be argued that the Celtic mysticism of Yeats, AE, and others, stood as a counter culture to the emergence of an Irish Ireland nationalism in the late 19th century, a movement dominated by the Gaelic League and often violent republican forces. Yeats' visionary mythology was, in Richard Kearney's words, 'a plea for a unifying notion of identity and sovereignty, based upon an 'ancient Irish sect' which preceded all contemporary dissension' (120), arguably setting itself against the prevalent ideological mood of the time. Indeed, Padraig Pearse, one of the principal leaders of the 1916 Rising, dismissed Yeats as 'a mere English poet of the third or fourth rank and as such he is harmless' (121), thereby indicating the fact that the revival cannot be regarded as a cultural monolith sweeping all before it. Pat Sheeran argues that, in fact, the revival had very little impact on contemporary Irish culture which, he argues, was concerned with 'far more influential narratives, whether of religious or civic provenance,

which shaped and guided post-Independence Ireland. Struggling for possession of the souls of the faithful in the period 1890-1920, were the narratives of the Catholic Church, of physical force nationalism, of petty bourgeois respectability, of zealous modernisers, of empire loyalists, of the Gaelic Movement and Home Rulers, to mention but the most obvious' (122). Indeed, Brendan Kennelly has highlighted the ironic similarity between Yeats' vision of 'tragic joy' and Kavanagh's notion of 'comedy' (123), and he argues that many counter-revival writers were merely attempting to 'make space' for themselves as 'poets' vicious denunciations of the work of others can be forms of self-liberation'. Therefore, it can be construed that the move away from what Kavanagh referred to as 'the myth of Ireland as a spiritual entity' (124) was less an organised concentrated movement and more the work of a few disparate voices struggling to create room for their individual, self-critical and locally based voices. Kennelly's description of Kavanagh captures the flavour of what many counter-revival writers were trying to achieve:

'Kavanagh...proceeding in a defiant and convincing manner to write about the most ordinary situations, events, people: the life of a street, the 'undying difference in the corner of a field', cubicles and wash-basins in a chest-hospital, the canal in Dublin, bogs and small 'incurious' hills in Monaghan, pubs, coffee-shops, mundane aspects of life as he saw it around him. All this, however, was coloured by an intense inner life, a religious conviction that 'God is in the bits and pieces of

Everyday'. The result is a delightful body of poetry in which the mundane is transfigured by the mystical, and the mystical is earthed in the mundane' (125).

CHAPTER TWO - ENDNOTES

1. J.M. Synge, The Aran Islands (London: Penguin, 1992), p.1.
2. Ibid., p.xlviii.
3. According to A.C. Partridge (Language and Society in Anglo-Irish Literature (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan), p.214), 'Synge visited the Aran Islands, off the coast of Co.Galway, over five successive summers (1898-1902); his total stay was no more than four and a half months, during which he made copious notes, and collected anecdotes and observations. When The Aran Islands was published in 1907, Synge acknowledged some indebtedness to Pierre Loti's Pêcheur d'Islande, an analogous study on the peasant life of the Bretons'. Similarly, A. Norman Jeffares (Anglo-Irish Literature (London: Macmillan, 1982), p.265) writes 'He (Synge) met Yeats in 1896 and possibly on his advice, visited the Aran Islands in 1898, where an uncle of his had been a Protestant incumbent in 1851; there he found the scenery and the Irish-speaking society stimulated his writing'. Declan Kiberd (Inventing Ireland (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), p.173) points to a less altruistic reason for Synge's Aran sojourns: 'Synge knows that he is only an interloper on Aran, a tourist, one of the first and, perhaps one day, one of the most famous among many: and that the more successful is his book called The Aran Islands, the more extreme will be the consequent disruptions of tradition by the day-trippers who will come in his wake. Indeed, he has - though he never quite says this- a vested interest in those disruptions, because after they have had their effect, his book will be even more evocative than ever. He himself will feed off the death of the old Gaelic culture, as do all coroners and morticians'.
4. Cormac O'Grada [Ireland - A New Economic History 1780-1939 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p.228, notes:

'As noted, the rate of return migration was low, and emigrant remittances were an important matter. Victorian civil servants produced estimates of them annually from 1848 on. Their numbers - after a little correction, an average of £0.8 million to £1 million a year, or £50 million over 1830-1900 - impressed historian Arnold Schrier, who noted that in the 1850's and 1860's remittances far outstripped spending on poor relief. In fact, Schrier's numbers are probably conservative. An American calculation referring to 1907 put the annual flow to the UK at \$25 million or about £5 million, and since the Irish accounted for almost three-fifths of UK-born American immigrants in the 1900's, it seems fair to assume that at least half of this was destined for Ireland. Assuming a figure of £3 million from all sources implies an inflow equivalent to 2 to 3 percent of national income before the First World War'.
5. See the interesting introduction by Tim Robinson to the edition of The Aran Islands cited above. Declan Kiberd also has an insight into Synge's work that illuminates aspects of the Aran text to be found in Chapter Ten of Inventing Ireland, pp.166-

188.

6. All references to TGH will henceforth be abbreviated thus: eg. (l.669) referring to line 669 of the Collected Poems (Newbridge: Goldsmith Press, 1972), pp.79-104, version of the poem.

7. ed. Seamus Deane, The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing (Derry: Field Day Publications, 1991), Vol.2, pp.516-7.

8. Ibid., p.523.

9. Ibid., p.523.

10. Ibid., p.525.

11. Synge, p.80.

12. Ibid., p.38.

13. Richard Kearney, Postnationalist Ireland - Politics, Culture, Philosophy (London: Routledge, 1997), p.108.

14. Luke Gibbons, Transformations in Irish Culture (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), p.33.

15. See the introductory chapter of this thesis for a closer analysis of the Indian Subaltern Group's work and Colin Graham's challenging interpretation of their work..

16. W.B. Yeats, Essays and Introductions (London: Macmillan, 1961), p.311. In the introduction to J.M.Synge - Collected Works - Plays - Book II (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p.xxi, Anne Saddlemayer writes:

'No one could have been prepared for the uproar, now almost legendary, that Synge's play created. The first-night audience, already made uneasy by the disturbing rumours circulating about the play, erupted at the word 'shifts', the line being made even more explosive by Willie Fay's substitution of 'Mayo girls' for Christy's 'drift of chosen females standing in their shifts'. For the second performance on Monday the 28th an angry audience forced Lady Gregory to call in the police and the actors were reduced to performing in dumb show. The following day, when Yeats returned from lecturing in Scotland, the three directors decided as a matter of policy to continue the performances for the rest of the week, under police protection, until Synge's play was given its fair hearing. By the end of the week the players had earned their first uninterrupted performance and on the following Monday Yeats invited those interested to a public debate on 'the freedom of the theatre'.

Similarly, T.R. Henn, in his introduction to J.M.Synge - Complete Plays (London: Methuen, 1981), pp.60-61, writes:

'As for the "wild language", Lady Gregory and the actors had indeed protested against its coarseness before the play was

produced. But it was, at least overtly, an indelicacy rather than a blasphemy that triggered off the riot: '...a drift of chosen females, standing in their shifts itself, maybe, from this place to the eastern world', the rancour of the mob centres on the fatal 'shift'; in an access of outraged modesty, Victorian in character, but connected somehow with the idea that the very word was insulting to the womanhood of Ireland, whose chastity and purity had become a national myth, even as the saintliness of the island as a whole'.

17. Yeats, Essays, p.312.

18. Ed. and trans. William G. Hutchinson, The Poetry of the Celtic Races and Other Studies by Ernest Renan (New York: Kennikat Press, 1970), p.2.

19. Ibid, pp.2-3.

20. William Chaigneau, a soldier of Huguenot origin, wrote The History of Jack Connor in 1752. It was his only major work.

21. Deane, Vol.1, pp.992-3.

22. Ibid., p.694.

23. Castle Rackrent was first published in 1800 and because no standard edition of her work has been published see George Watson's edited version of the book (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).

24. Claude Fierobe, 'The Peasantry in the Irish Novels of Maria Edgeworth' in ed. Jacqueline Genet, Rural Ireland, Real Ireland? (Gerrard's Cross: Colin Smyth, 1996), p.67.

25. Maria Edgeworth, Castle Rackrent (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), edited by George Watson, p.97.

26. William Butler Yeats, Autobiographies (London: Macmillan, 1980), p.470.

27. For an interesting account of the 'peasant' literature of these three writers, see Genet cited above.

28. William Butler Yeats, Mythologies (London: Macmillan, 1959), p.139. For an informative examination of Yeats's use of peasant symbolism, see 'Countryman, Peasant and Servant in the Poetry of W.B. Yeats' by John Unterecker in ed. Daniel Casey and Robert Rhodes, Views of the Irish Peasantry 1800-1916 (Hamden, Connecticut: Archen Books, 1977), pp.178-91.

29. W.B. Yeats, Essays, p.181.

30. Ibid., p.139.

31. W.B. Yeats, Mythologies, p.90.

32. Ibid., p.139.
33. Quoted in Genet, pp.141-2.
34. W.B. Yeats, Essays, pp.312-3.
35. Ibid., p.313.
36. Ibid., p.313.
37. Seamus Deane, 'The Literary Myths of the Revival and the Case for their Abandonment' in ed. Joseph Ronsley, Myth and Reality in Irish Literature (Ontario: Wilfred Laurier Press, 1977), p.319.
38. Edward Said, Orientalism (London: Penguin, 1991), p.32.
39. Ibid., p.32.
40. Ibid., p.32.
41. Ibid., p.32.
42. ed. Mark Storey, Poetry and Ireland since 1800 - A Source Book (London: Routledge, 1988), p.83.
43. ed. John P. Frayne, Uncollected Prose by W.B. Yeats (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p.249.
44. Ibid, p.250.
45. F.S.L. Lyons, Ireland Since the Famine (London: Fontana, 1963), p.45.
46. See the first 134 pages of W.B.Yeats' Memoirs entitled 'Autobiography'.
47. Ibid., p.153.
48. Ibid., p.45.
49. W.B. Yeats, Essays, p.325.
50. Patrick Kavanagh, Collected Prose (London: Martin Brian O'Keefe, 1973), p.254.
51. Deane, Vol.2, p.518.
52. Pat Sheerin and Nina Witoszek, 'Tibetan Tulpas, Postmodernism and the Invention of Ireland' in Review of Post-graduate Studies No.4 (Spring, 1995), pp.49-55.
53. Terence Brown, Ireland - A Social and Cultural History 1922-1985 (London: Fontana, 1985), p.84.
54. See essay 'John Hinde and the New Nostalgia' in Gibbons,

pp.37-43.

55. Hindesight - Photographs and Postcards by John Hinde Ltd. 1935-71 (Dublin: The Museum of Modern Art, 1993), p.95. This very interesting publication co-incides with a major exhibition of John Hinde's photographs in the Irish Museum of Modern Art in 1993. The booklet provides a comprehensive overview of Hinde's work in both Britain and Ireland and the commentaries, from Hinde and others, provide illuminating insights into this influential photographer's work. Equally, the booklet includes a comprehensive collection of prints of Hinde's cards that otherwise are very difficult to obtain. In the forward (p.12), Declan McGonagle, Director of the Irish Museum of Modern Art, notes: 'Hinde, the man and the company, are best known for postcards of Ireland which have become synonymous with a rural view of the country as a paradise which in turn became a key part of its official marketing to an outside world. This view has become deeply embedded to a point of iconic invisibility in the minds of anyone who has seen, bought or received a Hinde postcard. It is just as fundamental as the sense of the ideal in 16th and 17th century landscape painting whose compositional structure and aspirational content Hinde employed in his own work'.

56. Ibid., p.34.

57. Ibid., p.38.

58. Gibbons, p.39.

59. Hindesight, p.42.

60. Originally released by Republic Pictures in 1952, the film is available on video and is distributed by PolyGram Video Ltd.

61. Kavanagh, Collected Pruse, p.227.

62. Ronsley, p.323.

63. Horizon (January, 1942), p.61.

64. Ibid., p.63.

65. In his introduction to TGH, broadcast on B.B.C. radio on May, 1960, Kavanagh expressed his firm belief in the cathartic nature of comedy:

'In places, the poem here is a cry, a howl, and cries and howls die in the distances. You must have technique, architecture. But I am not debunking the unfortunate poem entirely; I will grant that there are some remarkable things in it, but free it hardly is, for there is no laughter in it. You can escape anywhere by laughter - levity, levitation' (Peter Kavanagh, November Haggard (New York: Peter Kavanagh Hand Press, 1971), p.15).

Similarly, Kavanagh appreciated the subversive role of comedy,

irony and satire when he wrote, in his 1962 Self-Portrait that 'the quality that most simple people fear - and by simple people I mean terrified, ignorant, people - is the comic spirit, for the comic spirit is the ultimate sophistication which they do not understand and therefore fear' (Collected Pruse, p.13). Furthermore, in his essay 'From Monaghan to the Grand Canal' (Collected Pruse, p.230), Kavanagh wrote: 'Laughter is the most poetic thing in life, that is the right kind of loving laughter. When, after a lifetime of struggle, we produce the quintessence of ourselves, it will be something gay and young'. Kavanagh's use of comedy and irony will be dealt with in more detail in the next chapter.

66. ed. Peter Fallon and Derek Mahon, The Penguin Book of Contemporary Irish Poetry (London: Penguin, 1990), p.xvii.

67. Patrick Kavanagh, Collected Pruse, p.19.

68. Ibid., p.19.

69. Gibbons, pp.23-35.

70. Patrick Kavanagh, Collected Pruse, p.19.

71. ed. Maurice Moynihan, Speeches and Statements of Eamon de Valera 1917-73 (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1980), pp.466-7. Originally a radio broadcast entitled 'The Ireland That We dreamed Of' given on March 17, 1943.

72. Ibid., p.90.

73. Joe Lee, Ireland - 1912-1985 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.158.

74. An interesting 1928 editorial from The Irish Statesman, entitled 'Seven Years Change' is in Volume 3 of Field Day, pp.94-5.

75. Antoinette Quinn, Patrick Kavanagh - Born-Again Romantic (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1991), p.12.

76. Ibid., p.95.

77. Peter Kavanagh, Sacred Keeper (Newbridge: Goldsmith Press, 1979), p.46.

78. Patrick Kavanagh, The Green Fool (London: Penguin, 1975) p.194. It was first published by Michael Joseph in 1936.

79. Peter Kavanagh, Lapped Furrows (New York: Peter Kavanagh Hand Press, 1969), p.10.

80. Ibid., p.10.

81. Ibid., p.10.

82. Ibid., p.36.

83. Deane, Volume 3, p.90.

84. The Bell was founded by Sean O'Faolain in 1940, and edited by Peadar O'Donnell from 1946. It ran for 19 volumes between 1940 and 1954. The collection is available in the main library in University College, Dublin (classmark J 820) and on microfilm in Trinity College Library. In his biography entitled Sean O'Faolain (London: Constable, 1994), pp.127-8, Maurice Harmon describes the genesis of The Bell:

'The Bell, he announced, had in the usual sense of the word, no policy. It would in time grow in character and meaning. Avoiding old symbolic nationalistic words, they had chosen for title a 'spare and hard and simple' word that had a minimum of associations. Their only job was to encourage Life to speak. He put his faith in a raw, inarticulate Ireland in which there were men and women itching to speak, to express intimate corners of the land, familiar details that mean Ireland to the individual. He opted for Life over Abstraction and opened the pages of his journal to the ordinary, the familiar, and the everyday'.

85. Kavanagh's Weekly, a journal first published on April 12, 1952, 8pp. and priced six pence. It ran for 13 issues and the final issue was published by Peter and Patrick Kavanagh on July 5, 1952. All issues, including the first edition off the press, signed by both Peter and Patrick, can be seen in the Kavanagh Archive in University College, Dublin (Special Collections, Kavanagh Archive, File Ref. KAV/B/64). A facsimile edition of the complete Kavanagh's Weekly is available in the Patrick Kavanagh Centre, Inniskeen, Co. Monaghan.

86. Taken from a letter in the National Archive, Bishop Street, Dublin, from the 'War Censorship' archive. This archive is contained in a series of boxes but the documents in the files are not catalogued.

87. Patrick Kavanagh, Collected Poems (Goldsmith Press, Newbridge, 1967), p.190.

88. Patrick Kavanagh, Collected Prose, p.227.

89. Ibid., p.153.

90. Horizon (January, 1942), p.57.

91. John Banville, 'The Ireland of de Valera and O'Faolain' in The Irish Review, No. 17/18 (Winter, 1995), pp.142-153, p.147.

92. F.S.L. Lyons comments on the inability of successive free State governments to change the real living conditions of its citizens:

'It was hardly surprising that emigration, which had slowed down, now again accelerated, leaving two dire consequences in its

train. One was that domestic demand for the products of Irish industry and agriculture was to that extent diminished. The other, even more serious, was that while protection had created a whole complex of vested interests not necessarily compatible with present efficiency or future prosperity, emigration, by removing some of the pressures for change, contributed its share to what seemed the immutable inertia of Irish life' (p.622, Ireland since the Famine). Cormac O'Grada [Ireland - A New Economic History], pp.227-8] provides a possible reason for Ireland's poor rate of emigrant return: 'Another exceptional feature of Irish emigration - or at least its transatlantic component - was the small proportion of return migrants. Data on returning 'Yanks' and repeat emigrants are lacking, and they may have been more numerous than we suspect. Nevertheless, they were still a small minority of those who left: the emigrant 'wake' was not for nothing. The contrast with most other places in Europe is marked: in the 1860-1930 period, one-fifth of Scandinavians and two-fifths of English and Welsh emigrants returned, while in the early twentieth century, almost one-half of Italian emigrants returned home eventually. Dudley Barnes has linked high rates of return migration with urbanisation in the sending country. On this reckoning, Ireland's failure to industrialise deterred more Irish emigrants from returning'.

93. Kavanagh's Weekly, No.13 (July 5, 1952), p.2.

94. Ibid., p.2

95. Kavanagh's Weekly, No.1 (April,12, 1952), p.1.

96. Patrick Kavanagh, Collected Poems, p.81.

97. In a taped interview with the present author in New York on July 7, 1995, Peter Kavanagh remarked that 'Patrick had no political purpose' in writing TGH. He went on to say that 'there is no didactic purpose in TGH. He is writing out of his own experience and whatever that shows is the message'. In a separate interview on July 6 he noted: 'TGH was, for me and for Patrick, a unique item which impressed us as an epic but somehow didn't flow along with our general interests. It was a thing apart. I never read it again until I reprinted it in 1972'.

98. Seamus Deane, in Terry Eagleton, Frederic Jameson and Edward Said, Nationalism, Colonialism and Culture (Minneapolis: Field Day Company Book, University of Minnesota Press, 1990), p.8.

99. Ibid., p.12.

100. Ronsley, p.101.

101. See the general introduction to ed. Samuel Clark and James Donnelly, Irish Peasants - Violence and Political Unrest 1780-1914 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), pp.3-21. In the section entitled 'Peasant Typologies' (pp.16-21) the authors classify 'farmers who were entitled to vote in poor-law elections into three categories: large, middling and small. It

is necessary to understand, however, that this ranking does not include poor peasants because only those with holdings valued at more than £4 or more were entitled to vote for poor-law guardians. A slightly different classification is necessary in order to sort out the entire agrarian population. For the sake of discussion, our suggestion would be that rich peasants in the Irish context were "large farmers", generally with over 30 acres of good land. At the other end of the scale, the poor peasants were those members of the agricultural labour force who had little or no land. They include pre-famine cottiers and the wage labourers. Middle peasants were those in between. They were the "small farmers" of Ireland, in most cases holding from 5 to 20 acres of land'. Terence Brown (Ireland - A Social and Cultural History, pp.18-19) has identified the complex strata, and over-riding poverty, within what could be loosely termed 'peasant society' in the first decade of the Free State: 'In 1926 53% of the state's recorded gainfully employed population were engaged in one way or another in agriculture (51,840 as employers, 217,433 on their own account, 263,738 as relatives assisting, 113,284 as employees, with 13,570 agricultural labourers unemployed). Only one-fifth of the farmers were employers of labour. A majority were farmers farming their land (which had mostly passed into their possession as a result of various Land Acts which had followed the Land war of the 1880s) on their own account or with the help of relatives. Roughly one quarter of the persons engaged in agriculture depended for their livelihoods on farms of 1-15 acres, a further quarter on farms of 15-30 acres, with the rest occupied on farms of over 30 acres. Some 301,084 people were employed in various ways on farms of less than 30 acres; 121,820 on farms of 30-50 acres; 117,255 on farms of 50-100 acres; 61,155 on farms of 100-200 acres and only 34,298 on farms of 200 acres and over. As can readily be seen from these figures, small and medium-sized farms were the predominant feature of Irish agriculture'.

102. Maguire's social predicament was explained to me in an interview with Peter Kavanagh in New York (6-7-95):

'When he (the Irish farmer) got possession of the land like many another person, he becomes totally concerned with it, falls in love with it, he wanted nothing else. As Patrick said 'he made the field his bride' and it is out of that society which right through the 1920's, when no-one was getting married in Ireland, that Patrick wrote about and it is the basis of TGH. That's an important background'.

103. O'Grada, p.81.

104. See appendix 4.1, 'Pre-famine Heights, Health and Welfare in O'Grada, pp.105-110.

105. O'Grada, p.95. O'Grada's analysis of pre-famine Ireland (pp.69-110) offers some interesting correlatives to the traditional picture of Irish peasant life. He writes (p.94): 'Irish birth seasonality mirrored that of England rather closely, in terms of both timing and amplitude. A variety of evidence thus

supports the belief that the pre-Famine Irish were relatively well fed. The 'relatively' is important; by the standards of Ireland in the 1920 or 1990 they lived short lives and had stunted physiques. Nevertheless, these findings should serve as correctives to a simplistic, apocalyptic view of Ireland before the Famine now current'.

106. Jeffares, p.451.

107. K. Theodore Hoppen, Ireland Since 1800 - Conflict and Conformity (Harlow: Longman, 1989), p.104.

108. Genet, p.37.

109. The Bell, Vol.9, No.3 (December, 1944), p.185

110. Flann O'Brien, The Poor Mouth (London: More Gibbon, 1973), pp.48-9.

111. Deane, Vol.3, p.93.

112. Ibid., p.105.

113. Ibid., p.244.

114. Ibid., p.245.

115. Ibid., p.245.

116. ed. George Russell, The Irish Statesman, Vol.11, No.11 (Saturday, November 17, 1928), p.208.

117. Richard Kearney, The Irish Mind (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1985), p.16.

118. Fallon and Mahon, p.xvi.

119. Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory - An Introduction (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p.111.

120. Kearney, Postnationalist Ireland, p.114.

121. Ibid., p.114.

122. Sheerin, p.51.

123. ed. Ake Persson, Journey into Joy - Brendan Kennelly - Selected Prose (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1994), p.55.

124. Patrick Kavanagh, Collected Pruse, p.228.

125. Persson, p.56.

CHAPTER THREE

PATRICK KAVANAGH'S THE GREAT HUNGER - THE POET AS REVISIONIST

3.1. The context of TGH: The Production of the Poem.

'One afternoon, when I came home from school Patrick showed me three or four pages of a long poem he had begun. What did I think? he asked. I read it in glances of wonder. Great, I told him; don't write another thing until you finish it. He took me at my word and finished it within ten days. This was later to be called The Great Hunger' (1).

Thus, in December, 1941, Peter Kavanagh (see Appendix Three, Photograph One) describes the length of time it took his brother Patrick (see Appendix Three, Photographs Six and Seven) to write TGH (2). The National Library in Dublin holds a first edition of TGH as published by the Cuala Press in 1942 but, according to the present writer's enquiries, they hold no hand-written versions. Neither the Kavanagh archive in the library of U.C.D. nor Peter Kavanagh himself appear to be in possession of the hand-written version described by Peter:

'It was written in pen of course since neither of us owned a typewriter. Since then he rewrote this verse in pen and sold the "original" manuscript to numerous collectors' (3).

When queried as to how an original copy of the poem could have been sold to 'numerous collectors', Peter pointed out that in

early 1942 Patrick was, as usual, very short of money and was freely prepared to copy out numerous versions of the poem and sell them as originals. These hand-written versions have yet to come to the formal attention of the academic community and Peter Kavanagh is understandably unable to remember to whom the scripts were sold. This highlights the pragmatic approach Patrick Kavanagh took towards his art throughout his life and the lack of financial resources that consistently dogged him and forced him into writing reviews and articles for journals and magazines which he invariably held in the utmost of contempt.

The first published extract of TGH appeared in Horizon, a London literary magazine edited by Cyril Connolly in January, 1942 (4), and the first 205 lines of TGH were published under the title The Old Peasant. There are no clear references as to why the name of the poem was changed but one can conjecture that it was an attempt to pander to the popularity of peasant imagery prevalent at the time, while Peter Kavanagh notes: 'The Old Peasant wasn't Patrick's title at all. I don't think he had a title for it at that time. Probably Frank O'Connor gave it that title' (5). There are also ten alterations to the text of TGH (based on the Complete Poems of Patrick Kavanagh (1972) version) as it appears under the title The Old Peasant (6) and while some of these could simply be typographical errors there are some more radical alterations in which the entire meaning of a line has been altered. Peter Kavanagh insists that the version of TGH that appears in the Complete Poems is the version that Patrick submitted to Cyril Connolly for publication so it appears as if

the latter engaged in an unauthorised and at times quite serious textual revision. Even the editors of a progressive literary magazine such as Horizon appeared unwilling to allow Kavanagh full freedom of expression. This was not to be last time that TGH was bowdlerised. When the poem was published by Macmillan in 1947 in the collection A Soul For Sale an entire section was left out, but this particular issue will be commented upon more extensively later.

According to Peter Kavanagh the poem was written when Patrick was at the peak of his poetic creativity:

'It was written when Patrick was at the top of his form. He was at the very peak of his form in 1940/1/2. He had the lyricism of Burns and the intellect of Yeats' (7).

Almost as soon as it was went on sale, in January 1942, Horizon was seized by the police and a ban was placed on its sale. Kavanagh was visited and questioned by the police, an event recalled by Peter in Lapped Furrows:

'One afternoon in January, 1942 when I returned from school to our flat at 122 Morehampton Road I found Patrick in a state of some excitement. Two detectives from Dublin Castle had just left, he told me. They had been questioning him about his poem in Horizon on the basis of indecency. Patrick had been pleasant to the police, he told me. I was disappointed he didn't grab the opportunity of assaulting them with one of my very thorny

blackthorn sticks. It was, I said, an opportunity missed' (pps.60-61).

The 'indecenty' referred to is contained in the lines below and it is interesting to note that these lines were also removed from the Macmillan version of TGH published in A Soul For Sale in 1947:

'O he loved his mother
Above all others.
O he loved his ploughs
And he loved his cows
And his happiest dream
Was to clean his arse
With perennial grass
On the bank of some summer stream;
To smoke his pipe
In a sheltered gripe
In the middle of July-
His face in a mist
And two stones in his fist
And an impotent worm on his thigh' (l.109-22).

Partially as result of the visit of the Gardai to Kavanagh's flat, rumours abounded as to the reasons for the seizure of the magazine. Robert Greacen, reviewing TGH in Horizon in September 1942, closely linked TGH with the withdrawal of the magazine from newsagents:

'The Censorship, which cannot be too much kicked in the pants and/or skirt, is reputed to have threatened Kavanagh with legal action for alleged obscenity in the extract from this poem which appeared in the Irish issue of Horizon and entitled The Old Peasant (all unsold copies of the magazine were seized by the Civil guard from Eire bookstalls)' (8).

However, Peter Kavanagh claims in both Sacred Keeper (p.104) and Lapped Furrows (p.61) that the magazine was seized, not because of the alleged indecency of The Old Peasant, but because of an important and formative article in it by Frank O'Connor entitled 'The Future of Irish Literature' in which he castigates the 'illiterate censorship' and laments the fact that 'one cannot speak of Birth Control, and the sale of contraceptives is forbidden' (9). It was probably for this single line that the entire magazine was seized, although neither the National Archive Office, the Censorship of Publications office, the Garda Central Records Office nor the Department of Justice have any records detailing the specific case of the banning of Horizon (10). Consequently it can only be conjectured as to why the magazine was seized. However, the editors of the magazine itself appear to believe that Kavanagh's poem was the reason it was removed from the shelves when they commented in their September, 1942, edition:

'The Irish number of Horizon has been banned in Dublin, 'passages in Patrick Kavanagh's poem being considered to be grossly obscene'. Horizon would like to take this opportunity to thank

its English and American readers for their extreme forbearance in letting this poem pass with favourable comment' (11)

Despite this apparent contradiction it is important to establish the authorities' reaction to TGH as it appeared in Horizon and to acknowledge that it was neither officially banned nor censored, but it certainly aroused a good deal of attention from the censorship board, which was no doubt wary of lines that referred to Maguire's toiletry habits and his implied masturbation. In such writing Kavanagh was truly responding to Frank O'Connor's plea for his contemporaries to 'have done with romanticism for the next twenty years or so and let satire have its way' (12). Indeed, TGH was amongst the first satirical perspectives of the peasant stereotype so cherished for its purity, simplicity and unsullied faith (13). However, in April, 1942, the Cuala Press, founded by W.B. Yeats, then run by his sisters, Elizabeth (Lilly) and Susan (Lolly), published the full version of TGH (14) and this was neither censored nor banned by the authorities (see Appendix Three, Photographs Three and Four). The fact that the poem escaped censorship upon full publication would perhaps support Peter Kavanagh's contention that, despite the visit of the police to Patrick's flat after the publication of Horizon, it was indeed Frank O'Connor's article that sealed the magazine's fate.

The response to the Horizon edition of Kavanagh's poem was somewhat muted. The Irish Times reviewed the poem on February 21, 1942. The reviewer, Roibeard O'Farachain, comments:

'It (TGH) is impressive in subject, and in occasional fine lines, but it has all the appearance of a good rough draft rather than a finished poem. Many of Mr. Kavanagh's old faults are observable; lack of form - particularly a blindness to the fascination of the stanza - the intrusion of vague, bookish, grandiosity into good, hard, sound, peasant observation; sudden lapses into banality; rhythmic dullness. There is matter here, but it needs much working yet' (15).

This observation on Kavanagh's 'old' faults highlights what the critics and the public expected of their poets. Kavanagh's introduction of a 'vague, bookish grandiosity' into his view of peasant life, to O'Farachain's mind, elevates 'good, sound, hard, peasant observation' above its social and intellectual position. The poet is obviously expected to observe and no doubt praise peasant life and to record its vicissitudes, but to attempt to analyse the underlying pressures or the unarticulated philosophies that underpin that existence would be 'grandiosity', in other words, reading more into rural life than it deserved. This review in many ways highlights how unprepared Irish society was for the TGH and its poetic vision of the void at the heart of so many lives in rural areas. To assume that an ordinary man like Maguire, a representative of a great swathe of the Irish population (16), could engage in sexual fantasies would be to break one of society's greatest taboos. The ultimate danger in TGH was that it broke the silence and portrayed the unspoken frustration that seethes in the soul of a man who is a victim of a society unprepared to accept difference or even to acknowledge

the existence of those who deviate, however slightly, from the norm. Partly because of the challenge TGH presented to popular national stereotypes it was greeted, not only with the attention of the authorities, but a more powerful social force, what James Plunkett refers to as 'that other great product of our national genius - The Greater Silence' (17). According to Plunkett, the reality of the vision offered by Kavanagh was too close to shattering popular perceptions of the peasant and was therefore ignored, ostrich-like, in the hope that the vision itself would fade and the peasant would be restored to the vital role of national hero, the embodiment of all that was quintessentially Irish, and concurrently non-British.

When TGH was published in April, 1942, only 250 copies were printed and this undoubtedly reduced the impact the poem had on the general public. In the Kavanagh archive in U.C.D. only four contemporary reviews of the poem can be found (18) and, despite being well received by those critics, it was not until 1947 when the poem was reprinted in A Soul For Sale that it gained a wider readership (see Appendix Three, Photograph Five). This 1947 edition included a version of TGH in which the lines allegedly objected to by the police in the Horizon version of the poem were deleted by Macmillan in London. This censorship does not really appear to have upset Kavanagh a great deal because in a letter to his brother dated February 26, 1947, he casually notes 'My book is out' (19) and does not refer to the deletion. However, while the reaction of the Irish civil authorities to the 'obscenity' was both predictable and consistent, the decision by

Macmillan to edit the poem appears somewhat surprising. The English poetry reading public were obviously regarded by Macmillan as unprepared for the demythologising of the peasant as their Irish counterparts. There are, however, far more risqué and 'indecent' passages in TGH which might suggest that Macmillan were merely avoiding a dispute with the Irish authorities over the poem rather than raising a fundamental moral objection to a particular passage (20).

In July, 1944, a review of TGH by Robert Speight appeared in a magazine called The Dublin Review which is notable for its almost unequivocal praise for the poem. Speight comments that TGH 'is the most considerable poem to come out of Ireland since Yeats' and his insightful comments display an appreciation of the text that was slow to emerge in Ireland:

'Mr. Kavanagh has reacted, as he is perfectly entitled to react, against the romanticism which has exalted the peasant beyond the reality of his vocation. His poem is not in the least controversial, though sentimental sociologists may controvert it. It merely states that the price that a way of life may have to pay for its simplicity (sic). It merely reminds us that a man may be obliterated by the mind as by the machine, and its conclusion suggests that in Ireland this price is paid to often' (21).

What must also be remembered, however, is the strongly ironic tone that pervades the poem and that the comic spirit, what Kavanagh referred to as 'the main feature' (22) of his poetry,

is a hugely effective and illuminating device within the text. Consequently, TGH can justifiably be viewed as a seminal satirical perspective on rural Ireland in which the peasant is portrayed as a tragi-comic figure whose lack of ambition, self-belief and self-confidence often manifests itself in a bleak yet revealing humane comedy and the poem stands in stark contrast to the somewhat serious and self-important peasant poetry of the revivalists. For Kavanagh, a 'lack of comedy' indicated a 'people who are unsure of themselves' (23) and TGH is an attempt to redress the apparently pompous seriousness with which rural Ireland was treated. Despite his later (1960) description of TGH as having 'no laughter in it' (24), there are significant elements within the poem that support his other contention that 'tragedy fully explored becomes comedy' (25) and an appreciation of the role of comedy within the text is a key element in the ultimate effectiveness and significance of the text not only contemporaneously but for future Irish poets.

In assessing the importance of TGH in terms of Ireland's post-colonial development, it is necessary to isolate the specific aspects of life in the Free State that the poem addressed. As already stated, Peter Kavanagh has claimed that his brother had no political purpose in writing TGH (26) but nonetheless TGH is, of its very nature, a significant poem that signals an initial shift in national consciousness which gained greater momentum in later decades. Through a stark portrayal of the life of Patrick Maguire, a bachelor farmer eking out his existence with his mother and sister on a small Co. Monaghan farm (27), TGH offers

an alternative perspective to the dominant images of the following four crucial areas of Irish life: the image of the peasant; attitudes to sexuality; motherhood; and Catholic Ireland.

3.2 The Peasant:

When reviewing TGH in 1967, Eavan Boland noted a debt to Kavanagh: '...we owe to him a hope more robust for its involvement in horror, a future for Irish poetry more certain for its confrontation with the past' (28). The liberation of the peasant from the myth that shrouded its existence was one of Kavanagh's most significant achievements in TGH. The 'horror' referred to by Eavan Boland was the real, ordinary and undramatic tragedy of Patrick Maguire's life, portrayed by Kavanagh as an authentic, recognisable and inherently believable human experience played out against a background of almost unrelenting moral and social hypocrisy. At the end of TGH Maguire 'is neither to be damned nor glorified' (1.782-3) and this attempt at an honest, unloaded look into the life of a poor, uneducated and horrifically normal rural farmer was a major break with the preceding literary tradition. As Antoinette Quinn notes: 'It (TGH) is bred of a new iconoclastic movement in Irish letters, a realist revolution against anachronistic and destructive national fantasies' (29). The voice given to the peasant by Kavanagh is noticeably and deliberately closer to the common reality than Yeats' Red Hanrahan or Synge's Christy Mahon or many other literary representations of this central cultural icon.

Kavanagh's peasant is not set up as an overt challenge to any perceived notion of identity but is unrelenting in its wearing away of the peasant myth in favour of what Kavanagh referred to as 'the reality of the spirit' (30). Far from his earlier poetic evocations of a fertile, primal farm life, particularly in 'To The Man After The Harrow' (1933) where the horses plough through 'The mist where Genesis began' (CP.,p.10), TGH immediately establishes the cloying, clogging nature of the clay, worked by 'mechanical' men with all the enthusiasm and interest of 'scarecrows'.

The small, independent self-sufficient married farmer was regarded by both church and state as the basic economic and social unit of post-independence Ireland, a microcosmic manifestation of de Valera's political and social philosophies. Within this unit, traditional family life was sustainable and therefore the morals and values of a Catholic country were given crucial support. However, in TGH, Kavanagh asks a crucial rhetorical question:

'...is there anything we can prove
Of life as it is broken-backed over the Book
Of Death?' (1.4-6)

Kavanagh challenges the inferences drawn by de Valera and others over the values inherent in the predominantly rural and agricultural nature of Irish society. Once again, far from the de Valerian 'cosy homesteads' image of rural purity, Kavanagh

asks if anything about the nature of people can be drawn from such an essentially rural scene as men ploughing a field. While the crows and the gulls hover, vulture-like, to devour the up-turned worms, the men break their backs to bring life to a piece of heavy, wet ground. Perhaps Kavanagh is suggesting that all that can be proved is the inevitability of the life cycle, the mundane drudgery involved in poor people making a living out of unyielding ground that will eventually be their final resting place. There is little if no romance in this depiction of rural life. Kavanagh immediately initiates a debate on an alternative perspective of rural Ireland through his questioning of the basic assumptions underpinning the myth of the peasant. Kavanagh asks:

'Is there some light of imagination in these wet clods?' (1.9)

One of the fundamental questions raised in TGH, therefore, is the nature of Maguire's tragedy which appears to lie somewhere between these two polarities: he is partially to blame for his own inertia yet he is the product of a society which Kavanagh accused of championing 'mediocrity', a society that did not encourage or tolerate any form of social or cultural deviance. Maguire, therefore, is an imaginary victim of de Valera's Ireland, and it is through this exposition that the poem achieves its most effective criticism of the crippling emotional consequences of the Free State's economic and social outlook. Maguire represents one vision of post-colonial Ireland that questioned the hegemony of the dominant image of rural happiness and individual integrity. As James Plunkett notes:

'In the literature of the 19th century the peasant is an amiable buffoon. In the literature of our day he appears in various guises : the mystical peasant of Yeats, the unbaptised peasant of O'Donnell, the brute-like peasantry of O'Flaherty. It is only when we come to a poem, The Great Hunger by Patrick Kavanagh, that he emerges as a whole man' (31).

The replacement of sentimentalism with satire, called for by Frank O'Connor in his Horizon article is a strong feature of Section Two of TGH. The lines removed by Macmillan, while only vaguely disguising a reference to Maguire's sexual organs, contain a satirical treatment of the popular perception of the peasant. The section opens with a bold statement concerning Maguire's moribund faithfulness:

'Maguire was faithful to death:

He stayed with his mother till she died

At the age of ninety-one' (1.101-3).

From the first lines of TGH, Kavanagh appears to be making a decisive and significant break from Yeats and his influence when he portrays Maguire as an emasculated, frustrated and emotionally crippled figure, dominated by social forces apparently designed to curtail his personal development. Similarly, in one of his most openly satirical poems, 'The Paddiad', published in Horizon magazine in 1949, Kavanagh mercilessly satirises both the revivalists and the contemporary literati of Dublin by categorising those who sought to regionalise and Celticise

literature:

'In the corner of a Dublin pub
 This party opens - blub-a-blub -
 Paddy Whiskey, Rum and Gin
 Paddy Three Sheets on the wind;
 Paddy of the Celtic Mist,
 Paddy Connemara West,
 Chestertonian Paddy Frog
 Croaking nightly in the bog' (C.P., p.212).

Arguably, Maguire's 'face in a mist' (1.120), coupled with the 'stones in his fist' (1.121), is Kavanagh's attempt to wrestle the image of the peasant away from the mist into which it had been placed by the revivalists and others. In TGH, Maguire would have freed himself from the negative influences on his life if he had the means of doing so, he 'would have changed the circle if he could' (1.218) but he was powerless in the face of a social, economic, moral and religious orthodoxy that had one dominant definition of rural national identity, namely the Catholic, married, parented farmer, loyal to the church and dutiful to the state. For Maguire to live his fantasies, particularly in the area of sexual experience, would have had such huge consequences on his social standing and economic future that he was simply too afraid to risk what little he had. However often he 'broke the tune' (1.223), 'the same melody leapt up from the background' (1.223-4). Maguire was simply a 'ploughman' (1.226) dragging himself home through the mud, in a land where

even the moon is 'April-watery' (l.228). The cause of Maguire's predicament is clearly stated by the narrator:

'Religion, the fields and the fear of the Lord
And Ignorance giving him the coward's blow' (229-30).

In the lore of the Irish peasant, so cherished by the Revivalists, two places achieved an almost mythical status: the domestic hearth and the village crossroads. The hearth formed an iconic part of de Valera's vision of the centrality of family life while the crossroads was the traditional scene of innocent matchmaking and dancing which was evocative of closely-knit rural communities, fulfilling a role similar to Benedict Anderson's concept of the national importance of Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. When Maguire masturbates over the 'warm ashes' (l.497) Kavanagh's reinterpretation of the significance of the hearth image could not be marked by a more powerful image as the hearth becomes yet another reminder of the sterility of Maguire's life. Kavanagh powerfully and unforgettably reinterprets the hearth as the focus of Maguire's and concurrently rural Ireland's sexual immaturity and immediately the poem wrestles canonical imagery away from the idyllic rural pastorality that it had come to embody, thereby initiating a challenging era of redefinition. Similarly, at the start of Section V, Kavanagh turns his critical attention to the crossroads and here there are echoes of his earlier (1935) poem 'Inniskeen Road : July Evening', where he turned an archetypal rural scene of a dance at Billy Brennan's shed into his poetic mantle:

'I am king

Of banks and stones and every blooming thing' (C.P., p.19).

In a very different mood, TGH presents 'evening at the crossroads' (l.232), and through a small, inconsequential observation Kavanagh captures the vapid, directionless vacuum that occupies the heart of the community. A boy picks a small stone off the road and for want of something better to do he throws it on to the railway track. The narrator comments on this:

'He means nothing.

Not a damn thing' (l.240-2).

Kavanagh's inside knowledge of his parish raises even insignificant details such as this into a moment of insight, highlighting the futility of life as experienced by the men sitting near the bridge. There is no purpose, no goal, no ambition, as exemplified by the boy's action. There is no direct, moralising intrusion by the narrator at this point but merely the recognition, through sharp and accurate observation, that the heart has been extracted from these people. The boy's fate also appears sealed as he seems to imitate Maguire's actions in Section 1 when he 'flung a stone in the air' (l.40) for no apparent reason. This link would suggest that life is cyclical, and that even the children of Donaghmoyne, who should typify and embody a hope for change in the future, are trapped in the same mental and physical restraints as the previous generation. This is a significant episode in the poem because it prefaces the

concluding 'no hope' (l.793) description of Maguire at the end of the poem with the lack of hope and purpose in the young. While Maguire's directionless life draws to a close the image of the young boy repeating his errors and following in his footsteps is a stark and depressing image.

While Kavanagh hints at the major external forces that mould Maguire's personality, from an introverted economic system (32) to a strict Catholic orthodoxy, the poem operates on a variety of levels and Maguire's predicament is depicted as existing in a multiplicity of often subtle dimensions. While directly challenging the social and moral pillars of the status quo, Kavanagh presents Maguire as a complex character, despite his apparent simplicity. He is a man who dreams and hopes, 'he is not always blind' (l.687), and he certainly contemplates the nature of his life, however unable he is to actualise any change. There is a universal quality to Maguire's stagnation which could be removed from the fields and still be recognisable as an eternal longing for something better. One of Maguire's greatest tragedies is the idea that 'there is no tomorrow' (l.257), and consequently no hope (33). However, within the confines of the pub he finds solace, and in this environment Kavanagh's comic expertise is exemplified. Maguire dreams from his lowly position of rising 'to a professorship like Larry Mc Kenna or Duffy or the pig-gelder Nallon' (l.447-8) and their conversations typify the stultifying parochialism and intellectual bluffing that constitutes 'their university' (l.446). Kavanagh's humour has all the insight, empathy and understanding of the insider and therefore the depth

of exploration into the nuances of village life is enhanced by the tragi-comic nature of much that takes place.

In Section IX, the popular notion of the ethereal peasant as the residue of the pure essence of Irish life is seriously and openly questioned by Kavanagh. In fact, Kavanagh expresses a good deal of anger towards those who, in the 1940's, appropriated the peasant as the central Irish cultural icon, stoically resisting the influence of the immoral twentieth century and holding fiercely and unquestioningly to the values of church and family. Kavanagh's treatment of the peasant strongly echoes Frank O'Connor's view of Irish literature as expressed in the same edition of Horizon:

'I am bewildered by the complete lack of relationship between Irish literature and any form of life, within or without Ireland. Blandly, sentimentally, maundering to itself, Irish literature sails off on one tack, while off on another go hand in hand Mr. de Valera and the Church, the murder gangs and the Catholic secret societies' (34).

In the middle of Section IX, Kavanagh launches into some of his strongest criticisms of the imagined peasant existence, and particularly the revivalist interpretation of that life:

'Why should men be asked to believe in a soul
That is only the mark of a hoof in guttery gaps?
A man is what is written on the label.

And the passing world stares but no one stops
To look closer' (l.384-8).

In posing this question, Kavanagh is appealing for an intellectual and literary honesty in relation to Ireland's self-perception. He is questioning the primacy of the rural model citizen in Irish folklore and contemporary social and political philosophies by asking why a poor, uneducated and predictable rural peasant should be so lauded as the quintessential model of national identity. For Kavanagh, the peasant 'is what is written on the label' and any attempt to read more into their lives would, by inference, be bogus and more influenced by political and social philosophies rather than the reality of the situation. 'The passing world' has only time for a brief glimpse at peasant life, certainly not enough to make an informed judgement, and this image is repeated in Section XIII when travellers spot the peasant from the comfort of their cars and feel 'renewed' (l.677) by their contrived and flawed image of him. The peasant soul is nothing more than 'the mark of a hoof in a guttery gap' (l.385), inconsequential in nature and as random as a hoof print in the mud. His description of the peasant as a sub-conscious creature living in semi-darkness is certainly a bold challenge to the more popular perceptions of the peasant. He argues that 'nobody' (l.390) can see the real 'tortured poetry' (l.390) that withers in the souls of these people, and it is only through an exploration of the nature of this 'tortured poetry' that a more realistic appraisal of rural life will emerge and here, perhaps, lies a key to understanding the real nature of Maguire's

existence.

For Kavanagh there is no grand tragedy in TGH. The 'passing world' has created an image of the peasant that is almost deliberately and conspiratorially oblivious to Maguire and the people of Donaghmoynce. Like the popular and idyllic John Hinde postcards, depicting red-headed girls loading carts with turf (35), the passing world does not want to take a closer look at the complex and often depressing reality of peasant life. Kavanagh suggests that if people did stop to look just a little closer at the reality before them (36) they would see a people whose hopes, loves and desires have, like pulled weeds, 'withered in the July sun' (l.392). Perhaps the most powerful image in the poem is reserved to stand in contra-distinction to the 'passing world's perception':

'Like the afterbirth of a cow stretched on a branch in the wind
Life dried in the veins of these women and men' (l.397).

This disturbing image of the cow's dried afterbirth, a vital source of life in the womb yet subsequently redundant and strewn across the branch of a tree, suggests that the lives of the people of Donaghmoynce are almost an afterthought to their birth. Their hopes and dreams are limited from the moment of their birth by the poverty and moral immaturity of their environment and while so full of the promise and potential of new life at birth they quickly become desiccated and defunct. The afterbirth is powerfully evocative of birth and pain and the necessity for the

nourishment of life once it has left the hermetic protection of the womb. It could also be argued that the image of the dried afterbirth represents the sense of betrayal felt by many after the establishment of the Free State.

In the penultimate section of the poem, Kavanagh satirises the popular perception of the essential peasant as a carefree spirit, born of the soil and evocative of personal and national purity:

'The peasant has no worries;
In his lyrical little fields
He ploughs and sows;
He eats fresh food,
He loves fresh women,
He is his own master
As it was in the Beginning
The simpleness of peasant life' (l.665-62).

Kavanagh's satire amounts to what could be termed a peasant's charter, incorporating all the popular pre-conceptions of the wonderful advantages of peasant life, the simplicity and uncluttered nature of an untainted existence. He cleverly uses religious language, 'As it was in the Beginning' (l.619), to imbue the lines with the aura of a set of immutable beliefs as articulated by those who profess an objective knowledge of the peasant. The contrast between these lines and the stark reality of Maguire's life as outlined in the previous twelve sections of the poem could not be more marked. Maguire, as far as is known,

has never loved a woman, fresh or not, and he is certainly not his own master. What the world admires and even envies is the apparent simplicity of life that it has lost and that the peasant has maintained. The peasant's heart is 'pure' (1.665) and his mind is 'clear' (1.666), free from the implied confusion and immorality of urban living, but TGH strongly indicates that this perception is perhaps the greatest deception.

In TGH, 'the travellers' (1.669) who peer out their car windows at the peasants in their fields are engaged in a similar process of patronising respect for the peasant based on an ignorance of the nature of peasant existence. By admiring certain aspects of the peasant's life, for example its apparent 'simpleness' (1.662), the outside world is creating an image of the peasantry and rural life that fits neatly into its overall picture of national identity. It can be argued that the purity, piety and freshness of the peasant is the well from which inspiration can be drawn in the face of the encroachment of, amongst other feared influences, modernity, Anglicisation and de-Catholicisation. Far stronger and more effective than any censorship legislation, the peasant becomes a bulwark against the influence of foreign media which would seek to sully the purity of Ireland's national identity. The peasant, in Kavanagh's satire, is an essential and sustaining myth that allows the Church and State to govern and because the peasant, like Patrick Maguire, 'is half a vegetable' (1.681), the church/state hegemony can proceed unchallenged. The peasant, therefore, is the unwitting tool of those who seek to govern by maintaining a narrow and exclusive vision of a static

national identity. Through a lack of education and a poor economic standing, the peasant is virtually excluded from the forums of power despite the fact that s/he is essential in the maintenance of the power of those who govern the very people they exclude. As Kavanagh ironically puts it:

'Without the peasant base civilisation must die,
Unless the clay is in the mouth the singer's singing is useless'
(1.675-6).

The collusion of various interest groups in the maintenance of the peasant myth is hinted at when Kavanagh comments that the peasant 'was not born blind' (1.686) and 'is not always blind' (1.687) but is perceived as blind by those on the outside. The peasant is only useful as a myth and myths must remain blind and dumb if they are to be sustained. The significance of TGH is the challenge it offers to this homogeneity. Although, according to the outside world, Maguire 'is only one remove from the beasts he drives' (1.668) he is still a victim of a system that seeks to perpetuate his misery for its own survival. In the surrounding natural world, birds are 'thrown' (1.699) from their nests in a gesture of faith by their mothers in their ability to survive as individuals. The peasant, however, will never experience this freedom. In what amounts to Maguire's epitaph, the narrator depicts the ordinary and mundane nature of his huge tragedy. This is the reality the travellers either oversee or more than likely ignore:

'But the peasant in his little acres is tied
 To a mother's womb by the wind-toughened navel-cord
 Like a goat tethered to the stump of a tree -
 He circles around and around wondering why it should be.
 No crash,
 No drama.
 That was how life happened.
 No mad hooves galloping in the sky,
 But the weak, washy way of true tragedy -
 A sick horse nosing around the meadow for a place to die' (l.701-
 10).

At the end of the poem, the narrator's description of 'applause,
 applause' (l.733) as 'the curtain falls' (l.734) is an ironic
 interpretation of the noises that surround Maguire as he finishes
 his days work and it further enhances the perception of the poem
 as a drama, acted out with a narrator and an audience. The choice
 of a theatrical motif for the poem could even be regarded as a
 direct attempt to reappropriate the theatre from the Revivalists
 and their romanticised visions of the noble savage, as Gus Martin
 notes:

'It has been argued that this imagery of the theatre dissonates
 with the natural landscape of the peasant's world. But the
 dissonance, I feel sure, is planned. The kind of Irish peasant,
 the 'carefree' rural bachelor, had been a stock figure
 particularly on the Abbey stage for a couple of generations.
 Kavanagh's journalism and critical prose bristles with suspicion

for this kind of superficial and facile portraiture of the people he knew so intimately. He saw it all as a 'thorough-going English-bred lie' (37).

Concluding his poem with another biblical reference, Kavanagh mentions the apocalypse, the concluding book of the New Testament (accredited to St. John (1:1-2), whose lines Kavanagh altered in the opening line of TGH), but not in terms of a day of atonement but rather the final, undramatic and predictable victory of the clay over humanity. Maguire's tragedy is being lived out in 'every corner of this land' (l.796) where the 'hungry fiend' (l.794) gnaws away at countless men and women until there is no hope or lust. A scream is Maguire's last, silent act, as he stands in his doorway and observes his little clayey kingdom, a poetic version of Edvard Munch's famous 1893 painting 'The Cry'. It is the silent scream of a man with no hope and because it is repeated in 'every corner of this land', it is the silent scream of an entire generation whose hopes and dreams and prospects are buried alive under a mountain of piety, a frightened and inward looking state, a restrictive and smothering familial system and a fear-invoking church which sees sin around every corner. The clay is merely the physical representative of the greater peasant tragedy, the tragedy of non-being.

3.3 Sex and the Single Farmer

With the family firmly placed at the epicentre of Irish society by a state that closely followed the morality of the Catholic

Church, sexual activity outside the familial unit was, according to Tom Inglis, a matter 'of private guilt and public shame' (38). The only alternative to sexual relations within marriage was celibacy, whether voluntary or, as in most cases, not. Maguire does not get married, largely due to the malevolent influence of his mother and therefore his sex life is limited to fantasies and masturbation, two aspects of rural life that no previous modern poet had explored as directly or explicitly as Kavanagh (39). Indeed, the open portrayal of Maguire's sexual fantasies in TGH irrecoverably undermined the image of the piety and moral probity of the Irish peasantry and herein lies much of the poem's significance. Of course Maguire could have engaged in sexual activity but he would have immediately stepped outside his known environment into the unchartered and dangerous territory of the deviant, perhaps facing social ostracisation or familial exclusion. Because of his upbringing, Maguire is unable and unwilling to risk such a fate (40). His fantasies over passing school-girls are curtailed not by a sense of probity but by a fear of imprisonment, hardly an advertisement for the moral rectitude of the rural Irish peasantry. There is no stronger image in the poem of Kavanagh's shift away from the romanticised imagery of the rural cottage towards a starker realism that encompassed those who nominally stood outside the national stereotype. Kavanagh's overt references to Maguire's masturbation again directly challenges the image of the robust, fertile male producing, in de Valera's parlance, 'sturdy children', with the furtive and ultimately lonely image of Maguire waiting for his wizened mother to go to bed before engaging in his nocturnal

fantasies. As a result of his sexual immaturity, Maguire has difficulty forming any relationship with a woman, thereby passively achieving his mother's unstated goal. Sexual gratification in TGH is full of the repressed tension of those who, because of its very unavailability, become obsessed with sexual imagery, witnessing to sexuality everywhere but in their personal experience. The silent fantasising that undoubtedly occurs in a strictly regulated sexual climate is articulated in TGH and is yet another Irish taboo that the poem voices.

Conrad Arensberg and Solon Kimball's seminal anthropological and sociological survey of Co. Clare in the 1930's (41) bears out the actuality of TGH's depiction of Maguire's predicament and it highlights the social and sexual isolation felt by many single men and women in rural Ireland. Marriage determined not only acceptable sexual activity but also land and inheritance rights, therefore sexual activity accrued tremendous social and financial significance. Part of Maguire's fear of any sexual activity is no doubt based on his lack of land ownership, this being denied to him by a shrewd and devious mother who was only too aware of what could happen if her son was given the confidence of ownership, thus bringing the traditional laws of inheritance into serious question. For the eldest son of a farmer, inheritance of the family farm often acted as both carrot and stick, inducing the son to work the land in the hope of one day owning it but also tying him to his parents for as long as they saw fit to sign over the land. Maguire is locked into this vicious circle by a mother unwilling to risk her future for the sake of her son.

Ironically her fate would probably have been secure if she treated Maguire with affection and respect, but then again she too is a victim of a crippling social circle that neither she nor her son can break.

All the major themes of TGH are broached in the introductory first section of the poem, including the great contradiction of Maguire's sterility and the bountiful fecundity of nature that surrounds him. Nature only serves to highlight Maguire's predicament, alone in the foreground, unable to partake in the diurnal natural cycles of reproduction. He facilitates nature and encourages its reproductive cycle to the neglect of his own needs and desires:

'Lost in the passion that never needs a wife -
The pricks that pricked were the pointed pins of harrows' (1.37).

It is interesting to note that while the police visited Kavanagh ostensibly over the use of the word 'arse' in Horizon the double-entendre of 'prick' survived. In fact, quite a good deal of potentially censorious material exists in this first section (42). For example, while describing the ploughing of a field, Kavanagh writes:

'Three heads hanging between wide apart
Legs' (1.22-3).

This appears to be a thinly disguised reference to Maguire's

redundant sexual organs. Furthermore, as Maguire roots around in the soil disentangling potatoes, the narrator asks:

'What is he looking for there?

He thinks it is a potato, but we know better

Than his mud-gloved fingers probe in this insensitive hair'

(1.43-5).

The narrator is mocking Maguire and the reader is aware of the sexual innuendos of nearly every act that Maguire performs, even if it is not made explicitly clear that Maguire himself is not fully aware of the hidden agenda behind his actions. Everything he does is a substitute for the sexual life he does not experience and his obsessions are compounded by the fertility he sees around him. Even the potato, perhaps the most potent symbol of the paradoxical sustenance and destruction of Irish rural life, does not escape Maguire's almost subconscious frustrations. The narrator implies, through the words 'we know better', that Maguire is not even aware of the fact that the hairs of the potato roots become pubic substitutes, so deep does his deception run. It is these mental boundaries and frustrations that prove the hardest for Maguire to break. Attention to his land might yield some economic gain but the emotional restraints and disappointments built up over years of repressing feelings are virtually impossible to overcome. Maguire daydreams through these difficulties and fantasises his way out of his sexual sterility and these images form a powerful and previously unarticulated feature of rural life which places TGH at the

forefront of a reappraisal of the foundational tenets of Irish society in the 1940's.

Patrick Maguire's furtive and unsatisfying sexual life is never far from the surface of the poem. In the Free State, the constitution was geared to support and respect those who bore and raised children (43) while little or no public account was taken of those unable to fulfil their desires through this prescribed route. For Maguire, this desire eventually becomes a disease, eating away at his self-confidence and increasing his feeling of isolation:

'But his passion became a plague
For he grew feeble bringing the vague
Women of his mind to lust nearness,
Once a week at least flesh must make an appearance' (123-6).

There is a sinister undercurrent running through many of Maguire's sexual fantasies, and more than once his thoughts, as interpreted by the narrator, appear to turn to sexual violence or sexual activity with young girls (l.488-93). Maguire sees the sexual analogy between the forced preparation of the soil for fertilisation and his own lack of sexual experience. From this violent image of the 'virgin screams' (l.150) the reader is immediately brought back to the trivia of Maguire's life where he has forgotten his matches. Perhaps this poetic technique has been utilised by Kavanagh to highlight the fact that Maguire's fantasies are an omnipresent reality and a vital survival

strategy, allowing him to cope with the predictability of his existence by transforming the ordinary into the forbidden and, because these fantasies are never realised, allowing him the satisfaction of a clandestine relief. Society has nothing to offer Maguire so he is forced to create his own world where he controls what happens, however debilitating it ultimately proves. This further enhances the crucial role played by TGH in the emergence of a critical counter-culture as Kavanagh was prepared to expose the potential violence and abuse which inevitably lurks behind the facade of an apparently rigidly adhered to moral code. In fact, the poem intimates that one is dangerously predicated upon the other.

From the depiction of the moral and intellectual restraints that Maguire is under, the narrative moves to another of his furtive and passive pseudo-sexual encounters, this time with a woman who appears to be a fellow victim of the great 'lie' surrounding sexuality that Maguire tragically believes in. As the woman, simply named 'Agnes', walks through a hay-field, the narrative echoes a similar scene to that in Section IV where Maguire was 'too earnest' when encountering a girl in another hayfield (1.210). This time, however, it is the woman who betrays the signs of repressed sexual impulses :

'And Agnes held her skirts sensationally up,
And not because the grass was wet either.
A man was watching her, Patrick Maguire' (1.305-7).

This scene manifests so much of the physical frustration and mental torment that the prurient rural approach to sexuality created in young people. It takes place away from people and public places, on a short cut through the fields, thus increasing the furtive, forbidden nature of their behaviour. However innocent their apparently chance meeting might appear, they both ensure that it occurs away from judging eyes. Agnes is teasing Maguire, self-consciously and 'sensationally' lifting her skirt as she walks through the grass. However, it quickly becomes apparent that this action does not derive from a sexual self-confidence or bravado but from the same quagmire of emotions that confines Maguire to his state of fantasy, specifically an inherent fear of the consequences of any sexual activity (44). There is also, however, a somewhat sinister feeling to the notion of Maguire 'watching her'. Agnes's emotional state, as recounted by the narrator, indicates that the degree of isolation experienced by Maguire is not confined to single, unmarried men but is a common dilemma for many of the people of Donaghmoyne:

'She was in love with passion and its weakness
 And the wet grass could never cool the fire
 That radiated from her unwanted womb
 In that country, in that metaphysical land
 Where flesh was a thought more spiritual than music
 Among the stars - out of reach of the peasant's hand' (1.308-313).

As he gets older, Maguire begins to accrue the trappings of

seniority in the parish, such as the reputation of being a good man for advice or the distinction of holding the collection box at Sunday mass. However, as he ages, his fantasies, though not quite expired, become more lewd and in many ways more dangerous. As local schoolgirls pass his window every morning on their way to school, they begin to stimulate his sexual imagination:

'He had an idea. Schoolgirls of thirteen
 Would see no political intrigue in an old man's friendship.
 Love
 The heifer waiting to be nosed by the old bull' (L.490-3).

Maguire appears now to have moved beyond the relatively innocent fantasies over Agnes in the meadow to more dangerous fantasies involving schoolgirls of thirteen. It is perhaps because they are under the legal age of sexual consent that Maguire finds them attractive, since not only would young girls probably not see through the innuendo of his advances but his paedophile friendliness would have the heightened sexual attraction of illegality. Kavanagh leaves little doubt about the nature of Maguire's fantasies as they move into a sinister and dangerous realm. Maguire is well aware of this development and consequently falls back on his only form of sexual expression:

'That notion passed too - there was the danger of talk
 And jails narrower than the five-sod ridge
 And colder than the black hills facing Armagh in February.
 He sinned over the warm ashes again and his crime

The law's long arm could not serve with 'time' (1.494-8).

TGH's explicit exploration of the development of Maguire's sexuality, or rather the stunted, frustrated and often threatening nature of his sexual imagination, is a fundamental break not only with the preceding Irish peasant literary tradition but with seminal national cultural signifiers such as the moral and sexual rectitude of the rural population of Ireland. Kavanagh's images destroy the de Valerian utopia of rural idealism and depicts a society imploding under the weight of its inability to accept or initiate change.

3.4 Motherhood

'Our courage breaks like an old tree in a black wind and dies,
But we have hidden in our hearts the flame out of the eyes
Of Cathleen, daughter of Houlihan' (45).

Thus, in 1894, W.B. Yeats symbolised the island of Ireland with a woman, Cathleen ni Houlihan, a proud, protective and loving mother of her brood. When his play of the same name was performed in Dublin in 1902 (46) it produced a strong, nationalistic reaction from its audience who readily empathised with the image of Ireland as mother and her downtrodden people as her children. With Maud Gonne in the title role, Yeats commented that 'her great height made Cathleen seem a divine being fallen into our mortal infirmity' (47). This example of the divinisation of the mother throws a good deal of light on the perceived role of the

mother in Irish society as it was depicted both on stage and in the national consciousness and shaped by popular poems such as James Clarence Mangan's 'Dark Rosaleen' (48). As the bearer of the nation's children, the mother was formally recognised in the constitution of 1937 (49), despite the lack of practical support offered to the family by the state. More importantly, the Irish mother was perceived by both church and state as a fundamental national icon and the embodiment of the essential values that they affirmed to hold, such as the centrality of the married family unit and the pre-eminence of Catholic social and personal morality. The image of Maguire's mother in TGH was not a flattering one and it portrays a radically different image to the popular perception hinted at in Yeats' Cathleen Ni Houlihan. It was she more than any other single influence who shaped Maguire into the confused, frightened and ultimately powerless individual that he is. In this she was quietly but decisively aided by the priest, whose joint interests were best served by a compliant, subservient and unquestioning youth who would provide the material and practical support necessary for their survival. Tom Inglis points to this quiet conspiracy:

'Moreover, through engaging in the same humble tasks of moralising children and looking after the sick, elderly and dying, mothers began to attain a similar perspective on the world to that of priests and religious. This was a crucial aspect of the alliance with the church, for it was through the similarity of practices and perspective that mothers fostered the vocations within their children on which the church depended. Equally

important, it was through an imitation of their celibate lifestyle, their body discipline and morality, that the mother inculcated a sexual and emotional repression which was crucial to the attainment of post-poned marriages, permanent celibacy and emigration' (50).

Inglis's observations provide a clear reasoning behind the actions of Maguire's mother but what is noteworthy is that TGH preceded Inglis by 45 years and while Inglis has the benefit of the intervening research and hindsight, TGH recounts the relationship from the perspective of lived experience as it was being played out in countless homes throughout Ireland in the 1940's. Maguire's mother is a character who, prior to TGH, was an invisible national phantasm, a stifling and negative influence on a nation unprepared to acknowledge that one of the pillars of the constitution, the mother, might be, in many cases, a cause of tremendous social unhappiness and, more significantly, largely responsible for a generation of emotionally immature and sexually naive men and women whose own relationships would consequently be fraught with difficulty. While not all mothers behaved in a similar fashion to Maguire's, and while Kavanagh gives his own misogynism free reign in his portrayal of both Maguire's mother and sister (51), nonetheless TGH offers the alternative perspective to that of the acceptable and accepted face of Irish society.

The blame for Maguire's predicament is laid squarely at the feet of his mother. As Maguire wonders if 'love was free' (1.73) on

the other side of the black hills, a very powerful image is created by Kavanagh:

'He looks towards his house and haggard. 'O God if I had been wiser!' (1.80-1)

Maguire's awareness of what he could have achieved, of the life he could have lived if not for the economic pressure of being the only son and therefore solely responsible for the running of the farm, is perhaps his greatest tragedy. The land and the house, with his mother and sister inside, become an ever-present reminder of the forces that have shaped and dominated his life. In order to keep her son, and therefore the farm, his mother made him 'suspicious as a rat' when around women and denied him the life he could have enjoyed. Maguire is well aware of the deception brought about by his mother. He knows that he has been robbed by a social and economic system that encouraged small, barely viable farms, and which wrapped up this drudgery in a cloak of religious morality which attempted to mollify or nullify any differing views or lifestyles (52). Kavanagh's motivation in writing TGH is strongly hinted at in these lines:

'And he knows that in his own heart he is calling his mother a liar

God's truth is life - even the grotesque shapes of his foulest fire'. (1.84-5).

Far from being faithful to a woman, a wife, until death, he is

actually forced into being unnaturally and involuntarily faithful to death itself in the form of his mother. His only hope of release from his economic and emotional prison is through the death of his mother and his acquisition of the farm. However, because of her longevity, this 'vow', like so many other aspects of Maguire's life, proves to be a false hope, destined to increase his bitterness and resentfulness towards both his mother and the unseen moral code that inextricably tied his fate to hers. Maguire explicitly blames her, and through her, Kavanagh implicitly attacks one of the foundational pillars of Irish society, namely the role of the mother in fostering a healthy social and moral climate. The classic Irish emotion of guilt binds Maguire to his mother, reinforced by a Church-sponsored morality and a state-sponsored economic system. Kavanagh could be perceived as attacking the very fabric of post-colonial Irish society by undermining the traditional perception of the family as the basic, supportive, formative and vital unit of society. Post-colonial Ireland was not yet ready to question the fledgling national identity which de Valera and the Catholic Church so frequently articulated. The opposition that is clearly articulated in Maguire's 'family' is a sterile, authoritarian and frustrated collection of individuals whose horizons are restricted by the very moral and social mores designed to ensure a predominantly familial society. Maguire is the voice of opposition, but his is a quiet, undramatic voice, passively articulating the other side of the national identity equation with devastating consequences.

While Maguire's mother exerts a significant influence on his life her character remains somewhat mono-dimensional and undeveloped throughout the poem. She is presented as the wizened, conniving and nagging reason why Maguire remains emasculated throughout his life yet her frustrations and desires, and indeed her reasons for treating her son the way she does, remain unarticulated. However, if Maguire is a victim of her desire to remain in the family home, then she too is the victim of a tradition of inheritance where it was the eldest son and not the wife who invariably got control of the land on the death of the male farmer. The laws of succession where the rights of a spouse were protected did not exist in post-independence Ireland and the wife of a dead farmer was literally at the mercy of her eldest son who could legally remove her from the family home if he so wished (53). Consequently, the pressure on a mother to impose her will on her eldest son was immense if she wished to remain in the family home. However, TGH remains a blistering attack on the institution of motherhood in Ireland. Kavanagh highlights the link between mother and church, explicitly depicted in Section XII (1.620-635), which was a strong formative influence on the nature of Irish society. Tom Inglis notes:

'They (priests and nuns) were the only people with power who regularly visited women in their homes and took an interest in what they were doing. Priests and nuns did not have personal wealth. Their ability to limit what others did and said depended on the services which they rendered, often free of charge, and on their being more moral and civil than those with whom they

interacted. The same means became those by which mothers created and maintained their own power' (54).

Kavanagh's depiction of the mother's 'lie' was an almost unprecedented undermining of Irish motherhood and is yet another of the significant ways in which the poem attempted a revision of popular conceptions of national identity. This depiction of motherhood places TGH at the forefront of a revised perspective of the Irish post-colonial order. Compare Maguire's 'wizened', 'venomous' mother, with a voice 'thinner than a rust-worn knife' (1.462), to a contemporaneous depiction of Irish motherhood, one which would have fitted easily into popular perceptions of the nature of Catholic Ireland and which helped sustain one of the myths that underpinned the perceived identity of the Free State:

'You may enter, almost at random, any of the thousands of Catholic homes in the land, and there you will meet the ideal mother, modest, hospitable, religious, absorbed in her children and motherly duties. The outside world, the masculine woman and her antics, have little attraction for her. She feels herself placed in a position by God, her life and actions their model. She is the class of woman who makes her home in the truest sense, a house in which her children are happy, and to which they ever look back with love when they have left it for a home of their own' (55).

The rows between Maguire and his sister are not necessarily the result of a mutual hatred but are fuelled by their mother who,

in her selfish logic, decides that her interests will best be served if her children remain bellicose. Perhaps she is hoping that the bitterness of household relationships will infuse her children and so make them less attractive to potential partners, thus maintaining the status-quo. Even on her death bed, she gives Patrick orders in relation to the work on the farm and her only confidant is the priest who calls every Saturday. His words of comfort are cliché-ridden and create an effective and unsettling impression of a complicit insincerity while his anodyne comment that 'your children will miss you when you are gone' (1.622) is so far removed from reality as to appear insensitive and unaware of the real nature of the woman. His statements are the usual blandishments of social convention and he duly gets his enumeration from her 'five bony crooks' (1.628) as she gives him five pounds for her 'intentions'. Kavanagh utilises a little rhyme to suggest the rote nature of this transaction:

'You were a good woman', said the priest,
 'And your children will miss you when you are gone.
 The likes of you this parish never knew,
 I'm sure they'll not forget the work you've done' (1.624-7).

Maguire's nonchalant reaction to his mother's death is entirely consistent and her passing has the significance, or irrelevance, of any other event in the monotonous pattern of his life. Even his sister leaves her mother's deathbed to boil gruel for the calves. The narrator leaves the reader in no doubt about Maguire's reaction:

'A mother dead! The tired sentiment:

'Mother, Mother' was a shallow pool

Where sorrow hardly could wash its feet' (1.635-7).

The Irish mother, so long the fulcrum of the family and consequently beloved of Church and State, is described by Kavanagh as 'a tired sentiment', a caricature of love and support that did not meet with reality. In much the same way as he debunked the revivalist movement by the time he wrote TGH in 1941, Kavanagh questioned the popular conceptions of motherhood peddled by the Church and State by depicting Mrs. Maguire as a bitter, manipulative and hypocritical matriarch who was prepared to sacrifice the happiness of her children for her own survival. This is yet another significant area of Irish life that TGH is attempting to reinterpret and criticise. TGH presents a very different image of motherhood, an image of a 'tired sentiment' (1.635), in which the sacred mother is in fact the root cause of her family's dysfunctionality. This is precisely the type of oppositional literature that O'Connor called for in 1942, a literature that would present Irish life in all its hues. TGH had necessarily to redress the balance by presenting an almost relentlessly bleak picture of the central elements of Irish life in order to provide some form of correlative to the predominantly uncritical images being fed to the public both at home and abroad.

3.5 Catholic Ireland

Desmond Egan has noted that 'a strong Christian belief in God runs through Kavanagh's poetry' (56) and this belief certainly permeates TGH and provides one of the few avenues of hope to be found in the poem. Kavanagh wrote in his 1962 Self-Portrait that 'a poet is a theologian' (57) and the God that he describes exists in the ordinary experiences of the people of Donaghmoyne. For them, God exists outside the confines of the church and can be found 'in a tree' (l.156) or 'in the rising sap' (l.157). God is a natural, organic omnipresent entity suffusing every element of their lives. However, 'the chapel pressing its low ceiling over them' (l.400) indicates how God is officially interpreted for the people by a Church and clergy more concerned with 'Respectability that knows the price of all things And measures God's truth in pounds and pence and farthings' (l.172-3). The dominant position of the Catholic Church in Irish society was enshrined in Article 44 of the 1937 Constitution with an acknowledgment of its 'special position' as the majority religion of the people of the state (58). TGH challenges the consequences of the Church's special position as interpreter of the divine through a series of repressive and strictly enforced dogmas that paid little attention to the reality of quotidian life. As discussed earlier, Kavanagh does not attempt to provide ultimate answers but rather seeks to displace conventional understanding of the location of the divine in ecclesiastical and clerical institutions. He locates God 'in the bits and pieces of Everyday' (l.286) thus advocating his interpretation of a universal notion

of revelation with God's presence visible in the world around him (59). This is the manner in which God is revealed to the people of Donaghmoyne, and not through a propositional revelation where Church teachings and dogmas are presented as a vital and necessary step on the road to a fuller understanding of God, what Avery Dulles refers to as 'a set of propositional statements, each expressing a divine affirmation, valid always and everywhere' (60). Essentially, Kavanagh is questioning the interpretative authority of the ecclesiastical institution of the Catholic Church in Ireland, thus establishing TGH at the forefront of a new social and cultural criticism.

Patrick Maguire is portrayed as a unique individual but also as a representative of a way of life for an entire generation. He has been denied a voice by a society unprepared for his desperate vision of waste and personal decay, yet he belongs firmly in a world created, crucially, by God and in his image. Maguire knows that the clerical interpretation of God's word excluded certain behaviour which, because it was considered socially and morally unacceptable, forces him into ultimately unsatisfying fantasy and disillusioning dreaming. However, Maguire sees God's hand all around him in the cycle of procreation, birth and death that forms the core of the farming experience. He knows that if God created everything, as he has been led to believe, then the vision of God's world is an inclusive one, encompassing ideas and behaviour rejected by the Catholic Church's interpretation of God's creation. This idea is a central force behind Kavanagh's poetic vision. He imagined God as the creator of 'life's truth'

(1.274), a truth which encompassed every person and each life with all their frustrations and desires. As a result of this, at least Maguire could imagine that his existence was part of a greater scheme and not simply a finite life, devoid of any consequence or meaning. In nature Maguire witnesses a universal revelation with God's ubiquitous presence in the 'bits and pieces' (1.286) of life yet his own sexual expression is denied by a human interpretation of God's apparent wishes. Maguire is at a loss to understand a paradoxical God who is so obviously bountiful yet miserly and Kavanagh captures his confusion in one of the poem's most poignant and pathetic images, an image that is typical of Kavanagh's poetic ability to capture a complex emotional and intellectual situation in a relatively simple and accessible form:

'And he cried for his own loss late one night on the pillow
And yet thanked the God who had arranged these things' (1.543-4).

Maguire's experience of organised religion has alienated him from the God that he experiences in the surrounding natural world. Tom Stack has closely analysed Kavanagh's relationship with the Catholic imagination and he highlights a possible reason for the alienation that Maguire experienced vis-a-vis doctrinal theology as opposed to lived experience:

'The system that Rome promoted, though grounded in a thoroughly transcendentalist and supernaturalist conception of revelation and faith, was paradoxically, both rationalist and positivist in

its theological method. It treated the supernatural 'content' of divine revelation as divine truth crystallised into propositional assertions formulated in Scripture and in the documents of tradition. These assertions, their supernatural provenance having first been demonstrated by appeal to divine 'facts', became the object of logical maneuvers (sic) and speculative development in isolation from the lived reality of which they were conceptual and linguistic representations' (61).

Stack's image of the dislocation of the Church and its theology from the lived reality of the people it purported to serve is a central theme in TGH and is another means through which the poem challenges the dominant ideologies of the early Free State. Adherence to Catholic doctrine as interpreted by the Church was the source of the latter's powerful social position and consequently lived experience which openly contradicted its interpretation had to be ignored if not openly condemned. TGH articulates Maguire's flawed yet tangible spiritual reality in sharp distinction to the rigidity and homogeneity espoused by the Church. In the same year as the publication of TGH, for example, Kavanagh reviewed The Capuchin Annual, a 700-page Catholic orientated journal, for The Irish Times. His review concluded:

'Intellectually, the Catholic Church in Ireland is in a weak position and not because the intellects are unavailable, but because there is no sense of critical appraisal to select the clear shining diamond from the dross of sentimentality, pretence and unthinking piety' (62).

This open criticism of the Catholic Church was a contemporary rarity and Kavanagh was publicly attacked by the head of the Capuchin Order who threatened to take legal action against the newspaper. Although the Order eventually relented, it was this intellectual honesty, often translated into fierce satire, that placed Kavanagh at the forefront of a vital social and cultural criticism. This view of the Catholic Church as an anti-intellectual organisation is also found in the writings of members of the counter-revival who viewed the Church as being responsible for influencing censorious legislation and, more importantly, for fostering a rigid and repressive moral climate in which the clergy became the interpreters of social behaviour. This climate created the people Kavanagh astutely described in his other celebrated long poem, 'Lough Derg':

'Their hands push closed the doors that God holds open' (63).

From its inception, the Irish Free State was inextricably bound to the ideologies of the Catholic Church. The power of the Church, from its control of primary education to the over-zealous piety of Eamon de Valera (64), had an enormous bearing on the nature of the new state. This power had a solid base in the primacy of the Church and clergy at a local level. Catholicism was and still is an integral part of Irish social life and the social dogmas of the church dictated the pattern of family life, a good deal of social legislation and the nature of sexual and social behaviour. The primacy of the family in the constitution was largely reflective of Catholic ideologies and through the

parish priest and his control over local primary schools the Catholic ethos flourished and was inculcated into children from the moment they entered the state education system. Consequently, Catholicism became as much a part of Irish national identity in the first decades of the new state as it had been formally excluded in the colonial era. Tom Inglis summarises the Catholic Church's power in Irish social, political and economic life thus:

'Adherence to the rules and regulations of the Catholic Church has been maintained in Ireland not just because people were indoctrinated through a fear of being denied salvation, but also because adherence was necessary to attain and maintain power, especially the honour and respect of others. Through its institutional monopoly of morality, operated through churches, schools, hospitals and homes, being a good Catholic became central to being regarded as a decent moral person, the same as everybody else. For many people, but in particular mothers, being able to limit the discourse and practice of others depended not on economic or political power, but on maintaining a moral superiority by over-conforming to the rules and regulations of the Church' (65).

Kavanagh was well aware of the possible and indeed probable reaction to his thinly veiled attack on the Catholic Church in TGH when he wrote in 1942:

'Whenever an Irish writer wrote a book that was not in slavish yes-man agreement with certain groups's illiterate ideas of

Catholicism he was sure to be damned by some scribbler who had failed to make the grade among the pagans. Who are as a rule the mouthpieces of piety here? The washed up who would die of exhaustion on the cold, high ledges of real creative thought' (66).

Kavanagh frequently attacked what he saw as the hollow piety of many Catholics in Ireland, particularly in the pages of Kavanagh's Weekly. Kavanagh himself had an intense personal spirituality that permeates nearly all of his poetry and one of the most significant aspects of TGH is its analysis of the nature of a specifically institutional Catholic Ireland. Kavanagh's was an insider's perspective on the nature of rural Catholicism, a faith that was such an integral aspect of Irish life that it was virtually impossible to separate it from every aspect of quotidian existence. While he attacks elements of popular piety in TGH, Kavanagh also accurately chronicles the nature of the integration between Catholicism and rural life in Donaghmoyne, capturing its important and often overlooked details, such as the social significance of being asked by the priest to do the collection. The critique of Catholic Ireland consequently provides the poem with much of its significance in the post-colonial context.

The rejection of rigid religious institutionalism in favour of a more personal God is a recurring theme throughout the poem and is central to the poem's effectiveness. Kavanagh argues that 'the priest was one of the people too' (1.314) and consequently should

be aware of the real fears, desires and needs of ordinary people, feelings that could not simply be categorised as sinful and therefore unacceptable. If 'God's truth is life' (1.85) then Agnes and Maguire's experience in the meadow is validated as part of God's creation. While Kavanagh was, according to his brother Peter, 'an intense Catholic' who 'revealed his true position to no-one' (67) TGH remains, relative to the institutional Church, faithful to its revisionist perspective on Irish rural life. The poem analyses the tangible manifestation of Catholicism as an integral and formative element in the composition of the rural psyche and attempts to deconstruct the consequences of an overly rigid and strictly enforced moral code. There is no doubt that Kavanagh took this task very seriously. When writing about the Irish poetic tradition he clearly indicated the direction of his poetic enquiry: 'the note of the poetic mind is a moral one, and it is this moral quality which the world cannot stand, for it is a constant reproach' (68). TGH is a reproach to elements of Catholic Ireland that had previously escaped censure, principally the alienating ritualism of the practice of religion and unaccountable clerical hypocrisy. The poem is a significant and unique attempt to analyse and deconstruct one of the most influential and powerful institutions in Ireland in the early decades of the Free State.

3.6 Conclusion

'In short, their (Roman Catholic Church) almost obsessive concern to preserve the Holy name of Ireland within a rather narrow

sphere of faith and morals may perhaps best be understood in the historical context of a Church which had formerly served as the "only institutional voice of a wronged Ireland and now found itself, in the absence of a colonial enemy, with the same crusading spirit that the former centuries had made a part of its being". Moreover, since the very ideal of our national self-identity had developed historically in reaction to the colonial outsider, the Church's protectionist reaction against alien materialism could now be seen as a means of preserving this ideal of national identity; in other words, a new post-colonial outsider had been identified - the permissive pagan foreigner - whom we could love to hate yet never cease to imitate. Once again, we find an interiorisation of the colonial model' (69).

Richard Kearney's idea of the 'interiorisation of the colonial model' is a crucial point when considering the importance of the poetry of Patrick Kavanagh in general and TGH in particular. Kearney argues that the Catholic Church identified a new post-colonial outsider to replace the British political and military regime, namely the 'permissive pagan foreigner', essentially emanating from Britain in the form of a cultural colonialism that was perceived as undermining the carefully ordered social and cultural strata in the Free State. Just as 'industrial policy up to 1932 was concerned primarily with the protection of native industries from foreign competition rather than with the establishment of new ones' (70) so the Church, and indeed the State, sought to protect the Irish people from the neo-colonialism of British and American films, books, etc., and from

the influence of societies in which divorce, abortion and contraception were facts of social life and which were regarded as the greatest threat to the basic familial unit of the new State. While the State had to protect its citizens from the influence of the 'permissive pagan foreigner', it simultaneously had to deal with an internal reaction to its introspective social and cultural policies. Whereas Kearney points to a foreign source for the new post-colonial 'outsider', he could just as easily have pointed to the post-colonial criticism originating from within the Free State itself and hence to what could be termed an 'internal outsider', in other words, those Irish writers who, directly and indirectly, challenged the narrow cultural and social horizons perpetuated by Church and State. It is in precisely this environment that TGH achieves its critical relevance. The poem realistically depicts a rural disintegration which stood in direct opposition to the cultural hegemony of the new State, becoming, in Terence Brown's words, 'an outraged cry of anger, an eloquently bleak riposte from the heart of the rural world to all those polemicists, writers and demagogues who in de Valera's Ireland sought to venerate the countryman's life from the study or the platform' (71).

CHAPTER THREE - ENDNOTES

1. Peter Kavanagh, Sacred Keeper (Newbridge: Goldsmith Press, 1979), p.103.

2. Peter Kavanagh, however, contradicts his earlier account in Lapped Furrows (New York: Peter Kavanagh Hand Press, 1969), p.60, when he states that 'in two or three days he had completed TGH'. In a subsequent interview with the present author in New York in July, 1995, he claimed that the poem was written in a period somewhere between these two lengths of time. Whereas it might seem pedantic to contemplate this contradiction, it points to the possibility of the poem being revised over a longer period. Peter explained in our interview on July 7, 1995: 'It is possible that Patrick made changes to the typescript but I have no knowledge or memory that he ever corrected it. That was his general style. If he didn't get it right the first time to hell with it, because he was not interested in grammar and syntax. He had that. Patrick was such a good technician that it disappeared in his writing. You can't see it'.

3. Peter Kavanagh, Lapped Furrows, p.60.

4. Horizon was founded by Cyril Connolly and between 1939 and 1941 was jointly edited with Stephen Spender. Between Christmas, 1939 and early 1950, the magazine ran to some 10,000 pages and published a good deal of literature from new writers. Connolly had paid a few brief visits, in the company of John Betjeman, to the Palace Bar in Fleet St., Dublin, and was so impressed by the literary talents he found there that he decided to publish an Irish version of his magazine. A full review of the history and contents of Horizon can be obtained in The Golden Horizon, edited by Cyril Connolly (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1953). A copy of the January, 1942, version of Horizon, which published the first extracts of TGH, is available both in the Kavanagh Archive, U.C.D., and the National Library, Dublin (ref. IR 842 H2). Volumes 1-20 (1940-50) of the magazine are available in the library of the University of Ulster at Coleraine (ref. UK I805290x).

5. Peter Kavanagh, personal interview, New York (6-7-95).

6. The following are the textual differences between the Horizon (H) and the Complete Poems of Patrick Kavanagh (Newbridge: Goldsmith Press, 1972)(CP) versions of TGH (Horizon version first) and according to Peter Kavanagh the Complete Poems version is the accurate one:

1.6: (H) 'Here crows squabble' - (CP) 'Here crows gabble'.

1.19: (H) 'straightening' - (CP) 'straitening'.

1.21 (H) 'a horse nosing around' - (CP) 'a horse nosing along'.

1.42 (H) 'tease out the tangled skeins of experience' - (CP)

'tease out the tangled skeins'.

1.59 (H) 'His dream changes again' - (CP) 'His dream changes'

1.70 (H) 'The easy road to his destiny' - (CP) 'The easy road of destiny'.

1. 86 (H) 'The horse lifts its head and cranes' - Note: This line appears in both the Horizon and Complete Poems version of TGH but Peter Kavanagh insists that 'cranes' should be replaced by 'crashes', a word that certainly gives the line more ferocity and depth. This interesting editorial information is not available from any other source.

1.139 (H) 'Did you let the hens out, laziness?' - (CP) 'Did you let the hens out, you?'

1.167 (H) 'Among the poet's, prostitute's.' - (CP) 'Among the poets, prostitutes'.

lls. 185-8

(H) 'Who will ask philosophy of the folk running to mass?
They will meet at the end of the world, the slow and the speedier'

(CP) 'The farm folk are hurrying to catch mass:
Christ will meet them at the end of the world, the slow and speedier.
But the fields say: only time can bless'.

7. Peter Kavanagh, personal interview, 6-7-95, tape two.

8. Taken from Horizon magazine (September, 1942), p.218.

9. Horizon (January, 1942), p.62.

10. In August, 1995, I visited the National Archive in Bishop's St., Dublin, where many Garda records are held but no record of any order against Horizon was obtainable. Similarly, no record of any order against the magazine was available at the Garda Records Office in the Phoenix Park, the Department of Justice record office in Dublin and the Censorship of Publications Office in Dublin. The latter informed me that perhaps the magazine was seized after a tip-off to either a senior Garda or perhaps the minister and consequently no records are available. In his excellent essay 'The Pulled Weeds upon the Ridge' (The Bell, No.12 (March, 1952), p.72), James Plunkett claims that the Exclusion Order banning Horizon derived from 'his (the minister) power to do so deriving from a piece of pre-truce legislation kindly left lying around for him by the benevolent British'. In a personal interview on July 6, 1995, Peter Kavanagh noted: 'The Great Hunger was never banned. It was brought up in court in 1955 that it was banned but I went to the censorship office and they had no record of it being banned'.

11. Horizon (September, 1942), p.218.

12. Horizon, (January, 1942), p.63.

13. In a personal interview on July 7, 1995, Peter Kavanagh commented on the peasant phenomenon of the 1930's: 'The peasant was an invention of Synge and Yeats. They didn't write about themselves but they invented the peasant which was an easy way of creating a form of literature. It was all false. There was a folklore that we were all packed to the teeth with in Inniskeen'.

14. There are two easily available first edition copies of TGH. One, dedicated to Peter and signed by Patrick (dated June 23, 1942), is in the Kavanagh Archive at U.C.D. The other is in the National Library in Dublin (ref. Lo 9029). The back page of this copy reads:

'250 copies of this book have been set in Caslan type, and printed by Esther Ryan and Marie Gill, on paper made in Ireland, and published by The Cuala Press, 46 Palmerstown Road, Dublin. Finished in the third week of April, 1942'.

Peter Kavanagh allowed me to view his first edition of TGH during our meeting in July, 1995 (see photograph 3 in Appendix Three). On the fly-leaf is the first appearance of a poem written by Patrick entitled 'Aladin' (sic) (Collected Poems, p.381, see Appendix Three, photograph 4) and the book is dedicated to Lord Dunsany ((1878-1957) Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett, the 18th Baron Dunsany of County Meath and a writer of fantasy literature) who, according to Peter, Patrick 'despised' but, as usual, was short of the kind of funds that he hoped Dunsany could supply!

15. The Irish Times, February 21, 1942.

16. See Tom Inglis, Moral Monopoly - The Catholic Church in Modern Irish Society (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987), pp.175-9.

17. From an article entitled 'The Pulled weeds on the Ridge', by James Plunkett in The Bell, Vol. xviii, No.12 (1953), p.70. This is an excellent personal review of TGH in which Plunkett concludes:

'Is the resultant picture a true one? I do not know. But I do know it is persuasive, moving, unremittingly honest, with moments of intense illumination which are like the sting of spittle on blind eyes, bidding them to open and see. The bits and pieces of Irish rural life, transmuted by the fire of one imagination, emerge as a synthesis. The poet creates his own truth' (p.78).

18. These four reviews of TGH can be found in the Kavanagh Archive in U.C.D., file no. KAV/B/134.-

a. Time and Tide, October, 1942, anonymous.

b. The Spectator, July 17, 1942, anonymous.

c. Horizon, September, 1942, by Robert Greacen.

d. The Dublin Review, July 1944, by Robert Speight.

The Kavanagh Archive at U.C.D. is an invaluable collection of books, reviews, letters, newspapers, photographs, cuttings, first editions, original documents, bills, postcards, etc., relating to the life and work of Patrick Kavanagh. It is held in the Special Collections section of the library at University College, Dublin and was bought from Peter Kavanagh for £100,000 in 1986. In the descriptive list to the collection, Aoife Leonard writes:

'In 1986 a fund was set up by Professor Augustine Martin of the Department of Anglo-Irish Literature and Drama, U.C.D., to purchase the Patrick Kavanagh Archive from Peter Kavanagh (the poet's brother). The following year the deal was closed and the collection was brought from the U.S.A., where it has been kept since 1987'.

There are, however, in the Kavanagh Archive, a number of later reviews of TGH, listed below with brief but interesting references which indicate how TGH grew in importance over the intervening years:

- Nimbus, Vol.3, No.4, (Winter, 1956), p.21, by Anthony Cronin: 'Though for some reason peasant life intrigues those who do not know it and is always a popular subject for second-rate art, the importance of TGH is not because the protagonist is picturesque or primitive. What Maguire loses is the promise, as many who have lost it, and the tragedy is that the tragedy is played out anywhere, in any hole or corner way' (KAV/B/119).

- Studies (Autumn, 1960), p.281, by Basil Payne: 'Our ultimate feeling is not that we have witnessed a study of failure; the society responsible for the tragedy of Maguire is censured by the poet, but the heart of the poem is a presentation of the situation in full dispassion of intellect and compassion of feeling, rather than the posing of a solution. The enduring power of love, in spite of whatever peripheral experience of it is superimposed by sinister extraneous forces, is implicit in the poem' (KAV/B/119).

- Review of English Literature (July, 1964), p.86, by Alan Warner: 'Although Kavanagh himself began in a Georgian pastoral tradition, he supplies in TGH an ironic antidote to nostalgic dreams of Irish peasant life' (KAV/B/117).

- The Dublin Magazine, Nos.3+4 (Autumn/Winter, 1965), p.11, by Douglas Sealy: 'Maguire has glimpsed the poet in himself but the light of imagination can only deepen his misery. His talent is lodged with him useless [sic]: instead of using it to recreate around himself the world of light he senses in there, he wastes it in impotent imaginings' (KAV/B/117).

- Renaissance, Vol.xxi, No.2 (Winter, 1969), p.84, by Willaim A. Fahey: 'Kavanagh's limits, enlarged by irony and deepened by the universal aspects of nature incorporated in his poem, are not

narrow. He is even capable of skilfully reinforcing his irony by shifting his point of view, juxtaposing to the realistic vision of the peasant the sentimental view of the tourist' (KAV/B/119).

- Eire Ireland, (A journal of Irish Studies published by the Irish American Cultural Institute), no date, p.17, by Grattan Freyer: 'His strong epic, TGH, conjured a new mood. Its impact on the Irish scene in the 1940's had some of the force The Waste Land had on English-speaking writers in the 20's' (KAV/B/117).

19. Peter Kavanagh, Lapped Furrows, p.98

20. Surprisingly, Kavanagh never reacted publically to this bowdlerisation, yet there can be little doubt that he did not sanction this editorial alteration. In a letter to Peter, dated April 14, 1947, Patrick requested Peter to 'hand in your copy of TGH to McCormick of Macmillan of New York and also the other Ms. poems as that is the collection I want published' (November Haggard, pp.101-2). Peter replied from New York on April 24 : 'I have handed in TGH and the poems to McCormick of Macmillan. He is himself only a reader for them but I suppose he knows the ropes'. The version of TGH which Peter handed to Macmillan was the version of TGH as published by the Cuala Press in 1942. I queried this point during our private interview in July, 1995, and he confirmed this point. Therefore, the version of TGH as published in A Soul For Sale was not the version submitted by either Peter or Patrick for publication. It was odd for a man who was not averse to resorting to the libel courts when aroused, as in 1954 (In October, 1952, an article appeared in The Leader newspaper entitled 'Patrick Kavanagh : A Profile'. It was anonymously written and Kavanagh decided the article was libellous and defamatory and consequently sued the paper. The case, which eventually came to court in February, 1954, became a cause-celebre in Dublin and was heavily featured in many of the leading newspapers. He lost the action in the High Court on February 12th, 1954, but this was later overturned by the Supreme Court in March, 1955. The details of the settlement were never disclosed. Peter Kavanagh gives an interesting first-hand account of the trial in a chapter entitled 'The Kavanagh Case' in Patrick Kavanagh - Man and Poet, pp.141-57) to allow this alteration to pass. However, there is no reference to this bowdlerisation in any of the brothers' correspondence, and there is no doubt that they openly discussed all aspects of Patrick's work in their frequent letters. In fact, they corresponded over the reviews of A Soul For Sale during the latter half of 1947 but again their correspondence contains no mention of the change to the poem. This is even more surprising in the light of the fact that Macmillan's A Soul For Sale, and consequently TGH, would reach a much wider audience in Britain and Ireland than the limited 250 Cuala Press edition of 1942. As a result of Macmillan's involvement the altered poem would be considered by many as the definitive version. There is, perhaps, a clue to Patrick's silence on the matter in a letter to Peter dated November 23, 1947:

'Macmillan offered me a retainer of 300 pounds a year provided

I did not go to America but stayed here as a "creative writer". The retainer is provisionally for two years but will continue as long as I like provided I keep writing seriously' (Man and Poet, p.125).

For a man who, according to his brother, 'where immediate cash was concerned he would sell anything, including me' (Man and Poet, p.84), the offer of an annual stipend of £300 might reasonably have bought a little restraint.

21. Robert Speight in The Dublin Review (July, 1944) [Kavanagh Archive KAV/B/134].

22. Patrick Kavanagh, Collected Prose (London: Martin Brian and O'Keefe, 1973), p.21.

23. Ibid., p.229.

24. Peter Kavanagh, November Haggard, p.15.

25. Ibid., p.15.

26. Personal interview, 6/7/95.

27. TGH is a long poem of 796 lines and is divided into fourteen sections. According to Peter Kavanagh, the choice of fourteen sections was not especially significant, but it can be surmised that Kavanagh wanted to immitate an often used stylistic feature of the epic poem by using numbered sections. Similarly, by utilising a narrator, Kavanagh adopts another central feature of the epic genre and it is important to highlight the role of the narrator in the poem as it is the narrator, and not Maguire, who articulates many of the poem's central themes. Kavanagh uses a narrative device to distance the poetic voice from the chief protagonist, Patrick Maguire, principally in order to maintain the poem's authenticity as the latter would simply be incapable of articulating his frustrations beyond mere utterances. It must be remembered that Maguire 'was helpless' (l.216), a man 'who will hardly remember that life happened to him' (l.764) and who, when he dies, 'will feel no different than when he walked through the streets of Donaghmoynne' (l.756), where he will lie in a deep-drilled potato-field' (l.784-5). The narrator fills in the gaps of Maguire's experience of life and presents his life as a visible tragedy, questioning the nature of his existence and probing the possible truths that underpin his life. To what extent the narrator is voicing Kavanagh's sentiments and to what extent Maguire represents Kavanagh is a difficult question to answer because Kavanagh did not directly indicate a link between himself and the narrator. Nonetheless, there are strong similarities between the narrator's reflections on the nature of Maguire's existence and Kavanagh's prose writings, particularly Self-Portrait, From Monaghan to the Grand Canal and in many of the editorials from Kavanagh's Weekly. Indeed, in his B.B.C. radio introduction to TGH in 1960 Kavanagh said 'I am not going to listen to TGH being read tonight because the experience would be too harrowing', thus linking himself intimately with the whole

poetic experience and also, perhaps, with elements in Maguire's personal experience. He goes on to say 'Of course I ought to mention that I was born and bred and reared in such a society and such a landscape as TGH described' (November Haggard, p.16), further linking his personal experience with that of both Maguire and the narrator.

28. Eavon Boland, 'In Praise of Praise', taken from The Irish Times, Friday and Saturday, (March 24 and 25, 1967).

29. Antoinette Quinn, Patrick Kavanagh - Born-Again Romantic (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1991), p.107.

30. Patrick Kavanagh, Collected Pruse, p.22.

31. Plunkett, p.69.

32. David O'Mahony, in his book The Irish Economy (Cork: Cork University Press, 1964), p.177, comments on the early economic policies of the Free State:

'In the early days of the Irish Free State the Government was mainly concerned with trying to establish the various organs of State rather than with economic affairs. It is not surprising, therefore, that economic policy did not loom very large in the first decade or so of the life of the newly established State, and that it played a relatively minor role compared with the dominating position it occupies today'. De Valera's government of 1932 'straight away set a policy of self-sufficiency in operation here also' and 'a thorough-going system of protection was introduced' (p.180).

33. There are some interesting parallels between Maguire and Kavanagh's own private life, particularly in relation to a vague and somewhat comical sense of hope exemplified by a letter written by Patrick to his brother Peter on December 12, 1947:

'Inniskeen is a frightfully sordid, squalid, slummy place. Gutter and low living. Unfit for human habitation. However, with that house re-decorated and repaired it would be fine. And with a telephone up from the railway and an engine to generate electricity... That's my plan. I am fine though with the wet weather getting a share of colds. Will easily pick up a woman now, I think'.

This letter is taken from the Kavanagh Archive, U.C.D., file reference KAV/B/80, and is a letter from Patrick to Peter on The Bell headed notepaper dated 12-12-47. This letter was also published in Lapped Furrows, p.128. It is interesting to note a piece of editing by Peter Kavanagh as regards this particular letter. In the Lapped Furrows version Patrick writes 'O'Curry (editor of The Standard) the crook is very annoyed that I only do the films each week for him'. However, the original letter in the archive reads 'O'Curry the crook is very annoyed that I only do the films each week for him. Fuck him.' Quite a difference! Indeed, the letters in the Kavanagh Archive, though not

catalogued, provide candid and revealing insights into Kavanagh's attitudes towards a variety of people and subjects.

34. Horizon (January, 1942), p.62.

35. See Section 2.1, 'The Celtic Revival - The Cult of the Peasant' in Chapter Two, concerning the photographs of John Hinde.

36. Peter Kavanagh identified two local Iniskeen brothers as the sources for the character of Maguire in an interview (July 6, 1995):

'Take the Campbell brothers. I was going to school everyday to Carrickmacross and I used to see the Campbell brothers out in their field, on their knees in the rain picking potatoes. Both unmarried, of course. I said to Patrick, you could do better'.

37. Gus Martin, 'The Apocalypse of Clay: Technique and Vision in The Great Hunger' in Patrick Kavanagh - Man and Poet by Peter Kavanagh (Newbridge: The Goldsmith Press, 1987), p.288.

38. Inglis, op.cit., p.149.

39. There are a few examples of early burlesque Irish poetry, the best known being Brian Merriman's (c.1749-1805) famous eighteenth century Irish poem 'Cuirt an Mheon-Oiche' (The Midnight Court) (1780) which describes the complexities of the relationships between men and women in which women are forced to make matches with physically unattractive old men. While not as openly scathing as TGH, 'Cuirt an Mheon-Oiche' remains an early example of an attempted analysis of the formalities and hypocrisies involved in Irish rural sexual relationships.

40. In fact, the social order, circumscribed by the constitution, is implicitly responsible for Maguire's dilemma in that sexual activity was such a social taboo that any form of deviance from the code of behaviour would have had catastrophic results, consequently Maguire is clearly unwilling to take such a chance. Divorce, or rather the dissolution of marriage, was specifically ruled out thus further increasing the influence of the Catholic Church through its teaching that any sexual activity outside marriage was morally corrupt. In Article 41 the family is described as 'the natural primary and fundamental unit group of society', having 'inalienable and imprescriptable rights, antecedent and superior to all positive law' [Bunreacht na hEireann (The Irish Constitution) (Dublin: Government Publications, 1937), p.136]. This last rather cryptic statement further rules out any relationship outside the family unit as a sustainable and defensible entity. The constitution perpetuated the heterosexual, married, image of Ireland, where reproduction functioned as a primary aim of marriage, ensuring that the model of the family was engrained on the social conscience of the country. Richard Kearney notes:

'While the Constitution of 1937, for example, pledged to honour

all religious denominations on the island, it was clear that it privileged a Catholic ethos in certain aspects of legislation. So that instead of the sectarian wrongs of colonial history being righted (by establishing laws equally acceptable to both traditions), there was a feeling among many Irish Protestants that they were simply being reversed, i.e. that a new form of post-colonial discrimination was creeping in' (The Crane Bag, Volume 8, No.1, p.59).

41. The degree to which Maguire reflected rural social reality in Ireland can be estimated in the light of the work of two American anthropologists, Conrad M. Arensberg and Solon T. Kimball, who settled in Co. Clare in the early 1930's and produced a work entitled Family and Community in Ireland (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968) (Second edition), first published two years before The Great Hunger in 1940. In this wide ranging and comprehensively researched treatise on rural Irish life there are striking parallels between the experience of Maguire and the people of Clare. For example, the 1936 census in Ireland showed that Ireland had the highest percentage of unmarried men and women in the world and the lowest ratio of males to females (975 males to 935 females) in Europe (p.221). When these statistics are allied to the overwhelmingly conservative nature of Irish society, a clear picture of life in the 1930's begins to emerge. The family was at the centre of all social planning and the acquisition of a spouse was often the *raison d'être* for many rural people. Arensberg and Kimball write:

'A social system centring so strongly round the institution of the family condemns a large proportion of its members to celibacy and long-preserved virginity. Only through marriage does one attain full stature and one's family take its full place in the interlocking alliances of extended kindreds in the countryside' (p.213).

Any sexual activity outside marriage was socially prohibited and the people involved shunned on a variety of levels. It was much worse for the women involved as they were perceived to have 'destroyed' a family's 'name' and often only emigration offered relief from the violent community reaction (see chapter 11). Sexual conduct in rural Irish society was intricately bound up with a person's social role and any deviation from the norm was treated accordingly. Sexual behaviour was governed by the prevailing dominance of the family and consequently those who failed to find a spouse suffered social and sexual isolation. The authors continue:

'Failure to make a match is not only failure to fulfil one's own destiny of mating and procreating; it is also failure to provide for the dispersal and re-formation of one's group. It is also failure to maintain or establish the alliances making status among one's peers' (p.213).

42. Section II of TGH is the section of the poem that is perhaps most infamous, since it is popularly held that this section caused Kavanagh to be questioned by police in January, 1942. As

already stated, an unlikely alliance was formed between conservative Irish forces and a supposedly enlightened English publishing house when Macmillan and Co. of London published A Soul For Sale in 1947, a collection of Kavanagh's poetry that included a version of TGH. This version excluded lines 109-132 (based on the Goldsmith's Collected Poems version) from Section II of the poem (see Appendix Three). Antoinette Quinn (Born-Again Romantic, p.138) notes:

'Kavanagh's flouting of literary decorum was too extreme even for Macmillan who had already published Yeats' late, physically explicit verse. Unaccountably, they permitted the masturbation sequences but drew the line at allowing Maguire to clean his arse with grass'.

43. See article 41, 1.i, of Bunreacht na hEireann, p.136, which opens with the acknowledgment that 'The State recognises the Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society, and as a moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights, antecedent and superior to all positive law'.

44. The publically proscribed role of women in Ireland, therefore, in the first forty years of the state was that of a married, domesticated mother. The social organisation of relationships was closely allied to the proscription of sexual relationships so that virginity (especially female) prior to marriage had a close bearing on the woman's future match and social position. In their survey of rural Clare in the 1930's Arensberg and Kimball note:

'The status of boy and girl thus involves a definite kind of sexual organisation, based directly on social relationships. Nowhere is this better to be seen than in the case of the young woman's "character". Here the Church fathers and the country people seem to have attained quite a unanimity. Sexual orientation is inseparable from social role. Sexual repute and status are identical. The young woman's "character" is her full status as a social being because the famlistic system is such that sexual activity, no less than economic, is completely integrated with one's role in social life. Consequently her sexual conduct is no concern of hers alone' (p.208).

45. ed. A. Norman Jeffares, Yeats' Poems (London: Macmillan, 1989), p.133.

46. Jeffares writes that Yeats' play 'greatly affected Dublin audiences in 1902' (p.528) while Yeats himself wrote that 'lines spoken by Cathleen NI Houlihan just before she leaves the cottage always move an Irish audience for historical reasons' (Autobiographies (London: Macmillan, 1980), p.556). Indeed, Yeats proceeded to claim that 'Synge's work, the work of Lady Gregory and my own Cathleen Ni Houlihan ...bring the imagination and speech of the country, all that poetical tradition descended from the Middle Ages, to the people of the town' (p.570).

47. Ibid., p.528.

48. See p.149 of ed. Brendan Kennelly, The Penguin Book of Irish Verse (London: Penguin, 1988).

49. Article 41, 2.2, of the Irish Constitution reads:

'The State shall therefore endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the house' (p.138).

50. Inglis, pp.205-6.

51. A good deal of Kavanagh's prose writings betray a simplistic and stereotypical portrayal of women that is much more in keeping with the depiction of Maguire's mother in TGH. In an essay on marriage, for example, entitled 'Haste to the Wedding' he wrote:

'Women suffer love-making mainly to please the man, but the real romance is the knowledge that he has a salary that will support a wife and family, or is otherwise in a position to marry her' (Collected Prose, p.287).

This portrayal of women as materialistic echoes the actions of Maguire's mother, a woman whose only concern appears to be material survival at any cost to herself or her family. She epitomises Kavanagh's assertion that 'women are brutally practical' and that 'economics is the key to this marriage business' (Collected Prose, p.284). Kavanagh allows his real beliefs to surface when he proceeds to discuss the 'sound psychology' that 'there is even pleasure for a woman in the thought of being a slave' (Collected Prose, 285). With personal views such as these it is perhaps unsurprising that Kavanagh failed to portray a sex he was incapable of analysing fairly. In his private correspondence with his brother, Kavanagh betrays his confused and somewhat comical personal relationships with women. In a letter on December 12, 1947, for example, he asks Peter to 'send me in a letter a pair of nylons for my woman friend' while he concludes by noting 'I threw up a woman I have been acquainted with for a couple of years as she was too old, too ugly, too (sic) literary, too boring, too whoring' [Kavanagh Archive, U.C.D., ref. KAV/B/80 (56)], thus betraying his own lack of understanding or empathy towards the opposite sex. Indeed he was, at times, extremely hostile towards women, arguing in the editorial from Kavanagh's Weekly of April 19, 1952, that 'When they (women) abandon their perceiving bodies for their soon dried up brains they become intolerable' and whatever good he saw in women was usually relative to their influence on men. Thus he portrays women in his 1951 poem 'God in Woman' not as free-thinking equal partners but rather a benign and soothing influence on a troubled male world:

'While men the poet's tragic light resented
The spirit that is Woman caressed his soul' (Collected Poems, p.237).

52. In practice, the rural mother played a crucial role in the future material and marital prospects of her sons, and in particular the eldest son, who was traditionally the heir to the family property. While other children could marry and move away, the heir was placed in a very difficult position, encouraged to believe that his life's work was inextricably bound up with the familial land. In his study of Irish peasant life, K.H. Connell has described the situation:

'Many a mother, too, though happy enough to see her daughters settle down - even the sons who had left home - resisted the marriage of their heir. Perhaps with justification, she pictured herself the object of his affection over 40 years and dreaded her relegation; she dreaded, too, the daughter-in-law, scheming not only for her son, but for the kitchen and yard she had ruled for so long. By rousing a sense of sin, by ridicule, even by words unspoken, she kept her boy from girl-friends, leaving him awkward with women, perhaps incapable of courtship- a bridegroom, if at all, in a match made for him when her day was done' [K.H. Connell, Irish Peasant Society (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p.121].

53. Prior to the 1965 Succession Act, the practice of inheritance is outlined by James C. Brady in his book Succession Law in Ireland (Dublin: Butterworth, 1989), p.216:

'The principal features of the law of inheritance which governed the descent of realty... were that realty descended to his blood relations lineally, and his children and grandchildren were preferred to his parents and grandparents. Males were preferred to females. The deceased's heir-in-law to whom his realty descended was generally his eldest son'.

54. Inglis, p.205.

55. Quoted in Inglis, p.209.

56. Peter Kavanagh, Man and Poet, p.203.

57. Patrick Kavanagh, Collected Prose, p.22.

58. Article 44, section 2, of the 1937 Irish Constitution reads:

'The State recognises the special position of the Holy Catholic Apostolic and Roman Church as the guardian of the Faith professed by the great majority of the citizens' (p.144).

59. See Chapter Two, section two, pp.61-8, 'The Theology of Kavanagh's Outstanding Religious Themes' in Tom Stack Ordinary Plenty - Patrick Kavanagh and the Catholic Imagination, (unpublished M.Th. thesis, May, 1986). This thesis is an interesting and informative treatment of Kavanagh's Catholicity and has a specific chapter devoted to TGH, pp.1-46.

60. Avery Dulles, Modes of Revelation (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1988), p.39.

61. Stack, pp.63-64.
62. The Irish Times, (January 10, 1942).
63. Patrick Kavanagh, Collected Poems, p.104.
64. Owen Dudley Edwards, in his book entitled Eamonn de Valera (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1987), p.13, writes:
 'De Valera's relationship with the Catholic Church was from the outset a very curious one: he needed it not only for its stability, its non-Englishness, its relationship to Irish nationalist identity, but also as the parent oak on which his parasitical political religion grew'.
- He continues on p.16:
 'De Valera's political theology knew little ecumenism: neither did the Catholicism of his political lifetime'.
65. Inglis, p.93.
66. The Irish Times, (January 10, 1942).
67. Peter Kavanagh, Sacred Keeper, p.10.
68. Patrick Kavanagh, Collected Pruse, p.234.
69. Kearney, pp.55-66.
70. O'Mahony, p.178.
71. Terence Brown, Ireland - A Social and Cultural History 1922-85 (London: Fontana, 1985), p.187.

CHAPTER FOUR

BRENDAN KENNELLY'S CROMWELL - THE KAVANAGH LEGACY.

'I began by suggesting that my point of view involved poetry as divination, as a restoration of the culture to itself. In Ireland in this century it has involved for Yeats and many others an attempt to define and interpret the present by bringing it into significant relationship with the past, and I believe that effort in our present circumstances has to be urgently renewed. But here we stray from the realm of technique into the realm of tradition; to forge a poem is one thing, to forge the uncreated conscience of the race, as Stephan Dedalus put it, is quite another and places daunting pressures and responsibilities on anyone who would risk the name of poet' (1).

Seamus Heaney's identification of the function of poetry in the Irish setting has a particular significance in relation to Brendan Kennelly's (2) 1983 epic poem Cromwell, a poem that seeks to bring major historical events and characters from Ireland's colonial past into direct confrontation with the polyvocal, multi-valent post-colonial present through the imagination of the poem's protagonist, M.P.G.M. Buffun. First published by Beaver Row Press in 1983, the poem explores the voices occupying the troubled conscious and sub-conscious mind of Buffun, a man whose identity is shaped as much by the ghosts of the past as by the symbols and icons of the present. Kennelly presents his version of 'the nightmare of Irish history' (3) through the dreams and reveries of Buffun, whose imagination is populated by, amongst others, such history-shaping characters as Edmund Spenser,

William of Orange and the dominant figure of Oliver Cromwell. It is only by engaging in an often surreal dialogue with these figures that Buffun can come to terms with the forces and characters that have helped shape his current identity, and through this dialogue Buffun becomes a mirror through which a confused, prejudiced and highly contentious image not only of his personal identity but a larger Irish national identity begins to emerge. Kennelly's aim in the poem is not obviously to 'forge the uncreated conscience of the race' but rather to explore and express the many conflicting voices that in the post-colonial Irish context struggle to express a version of national identity. He is also developing an interest in Oliver Cromwell which pre-dates his epic poem and there are indications in earlier poetry of the seminal influence of Cromwell on Kennelly's psyche and his overwhelming need to confront his perceptions of this influential historical figure. In an early (pre-1983) previously unpublished poem entitled 'Oliver Cromwell Looks At An Actor Playing The Part Of Oliver Cromwell' (see Appendix One) Kennelly engages in precisely the kind of dialogue that typifies Cromwell, namely a challenging of hegemonic interpretations of complex historical events and personalities. This important poem points to Kennelly's long held fascination with Oliver Cromwell and Kennelly has commented that 'I see now that the very title tells me I was interested in a difficult, challenging perspective (4). This illustrates the germination of his interest in the dialogic approach to history that characterises Cromwell and the poem gives an early airing to Oliver Cromwell's theodicy which is such a strong feature of the later collection. Equally the poem

indicates the whole religious quagmire of self-authenification that has bedevilled Irish history. For example, in the poem, Oliver laments an actor's attempt to imitate him:

'In the name of the Saviour
Who could ever imitate
Me? Who could know the mind
That spoke to God and did His work
Where mad, barbaric blood
defiled the ground that I was sent
To cleanse and conquer? This was no dramatic
Illusion. This was the real thing' (5).

Kennelly's Cromwell is a natural and logical progression from Kavanagh's TGH (see Chapter Three, 3.1) in that it too is seeking to articulate voices that are generally either ignored or actively suppressed in the popular perception of what composes a specific national Irish authenticity. Cromwell voices significant historical figures and seeks, as did TGH, not to replace the symbols and manifestations of national self-perception, but merely to propound the theory that the myths that underpin various ideologies, and which support the actions of ideologues, are themselves sources of conflict and consequently open to a variety of interpretations. Kennelly's poem brings Ireland's violent colonial past into direct confrontation and dialogue with the present 'in all its bloody contradictions and bloody consistencies' (6). The poem does not advocate an abandonment of history but rather presents a re-reading of vital

cultural touchstones in order to better understand the complex nature of contemporary models of identity. It is a significant and important attempt to move beyond what Edna Longley refers to as 'the incestuous Irish anger' (7) into a troubled, conflictual yet questioning environment where Buffun's personal journey and growth mirrors a national maturation and reawakening.

4.1. Cromwell and The Great Hunger : Connections.

4.1.i : The Epic Form.

In his unpublished doctoral thesis, awarded by Trinity College, Dublin, in 1966, Brendan Kennelly examined the treatment of the Irish epic poetic style by a variety of 'modern' Irish poets including W.B. Yeats, AE and Austin Clarke. Entitled Modern Irish Poets and the Irish Epic, the thesis is an early indication of Kennelly's fascination with the potency of the epic style and it marks the genesis of interest in long poems which is such a feature of his work. Kennelly has produced eight long poems, beginning with Love Cry in 1972 and culminating with The Man Made of Rain in 1998 (8) and it is a form that affords him the opportunity to explore his over-arching themes in some depth. Of The Book of Judas (1991) Kennelly has written that he 'was pushed into a far deeper scrutiny of betrayal' (9) which can only be achieved by adopting the form of the long poem and thus his expressed poetic drive of 'entering into' characters such as Judas and Oliver Cromwell can be realised. Similarly, two of Patrick Kavanagh's most effective and important poems are written

in a recognisably epic form, namely TGH and Lough Derg, both of which were written in the extraordinarily productive year of 1942. For both Kennelly and Kavanagh, therefore, the epic form, however loosely that form is interpreted and utilised, clearly offers a poetic vehicle in which they both feel that they can explore their respective characters and plots in a dynamic, thorough, critical and wide-ranging style. Given that 'there is only one thing which can master the perplexed stuff of epic material into unity, and that is an ability to see in particular human experience some significant symbolism of man's general theory' (10) both poets utilise the form to tease out their own interpretations of their contemporary societies through the respective experiences of Patrick Maguire and M.P.G.M. Buffun. The epic form facilitates an exfoliation of the protagonist's experiences and reflections, thus allowing the poet to elucidate the underlying themes which permeate the poem. The length of the epic form aids a depth of analysis that is essential to the examination of complex concepts such as personal and national identity which forms the basis of the critical effectiveness of both texts. Consequently, the epic connection is crucial to an understanding of the thematic and stylistic links between TGH and Cromwell. Both texts are also linked to an older tradition of Irish epic poetry, a tradition that Douglas Hyde traced back to the Celtic verses of the Red Branch and Fenian cycles of the eighth and ninth centuries. Hyde writes:

'That the Irish had already made some approach to the construction of a great epic is evident from the way in which

they attempted, from a very early date, to group a number of minor sagas, which were evidently independent in their origin, round their great sage the Tain Bo Cuailnge' (11).

Kavanagh was well aware of the significance of the epic form of poetry and it can be argued that in TGH he was interpreting and recreating some of the generic forms he had come across in Homer and in ancient Irish epics such as the Tain and the Red Branch stories (12). When defending his notion of parochialism in an Irish context, Kavanagh stated that 'all great civilisations are based on parochialism- Greek, Israelite, English' (13), a belief which would almost inevitably drew him towards the epic mode of poetic expression. In fact, there are interesting parallels between TGH and the Iliad which illustrate the influence of the epic form on TGH. In his examination of Homer's epic, for example, Oliver Taplin notes that 'In the Iliad noble heroes move inexorably, by way of a combination of choice and forces beyond their control, towards destruction and dissolution. We are left with mourning, honour, endurance, and pity' (14). While Maguire emerges from TGH with little honour and only traces of nobility, there certainly appears to be an inexorable move towards his final destruction by a society unconcerned with his plight. Like the Homeric hero, Maguire drifts towards his death by a combination of personal choice and external forces, both of which contrive to create an image of pity. Taplin proceeds to note that one of Homer's greatest poetic qualities was 'the creation of memorable and persuasive human portraits' and this is certainly a central stylistic feature not only of TGH but of Kavanagh's

poetry in general. When Kavanagh wrote in his 1951 poem 'Epic' that 'Homer's ghost came whispering to my mind' (15) there is a strong suggestion of the influence of the Homeric epic and the celebration of the local in his work. Similarly, Brendan Kennelly has written new versions of Euripides's verse-plays Medea (1988) and The Trojan Women (1993), both epic texts in which he explores how 'across cultures, across the centuries, feelings, words and images began to fertilise each other and underline the delusions of the true madness inherent in that purely chronological view of reality' (16). This notion of the transmutability of words and images also permeates Cromwell and indicates Kennelly's interest in the flexible and insightful vehicle offered by the epic form.

There are, inevitably, significant differences in the precise epic form adopted by Kavanagh and Kennelly, differences that are closely influenced by the four decades intervening between the two works. TGH is based around a narrative structure which progresses relatively chronologically through the phases of Maguire's life. Kavanagh presents powerful images of the nature of Maguire's repressed existence while utilising an occasionally intrusive narrator that sometimes blurs the distinction between narrator and poet. The narrative emphasis in TGH is on Maguire's personal circumstances and social reality. However, it must be remembered that TGH itself is not unproblematic in terms of its epic composition, as Antoinette Quinn notes: 'Formally, TGH is even more versatile and varied than its fourteen-part structure might suggest, most parts consisting of a montage of different sequences, with successive sequences separated by paragraphing

as well as by variations in line length, rhyming and rhythmic patterns' (17). Cromwell, on the other hand, goes much further in the displacement of the formal structure of the epic with a phalanx of narrators pushing to be heard through Buffun's troubled sub-conscious mind. Chronology is plastic and distended, shifting both in time and space in consecutive poems, while Kennelly experiments internally with the structure of the sonnet, a feature discussed in detail in 3.3. Buffun does not emerge from Cromwell as a figure of tragic pity, but rather as a multiplicity of figures, expressed in his pithy observation that 'I spill my selves' (C, 159). These differences are perhaps symptomatic of the influence of certain literary movements, such as post-structuralism, which blossomed between the writing of TGH in 1942 and Cromwell in 1983. Kavanagh's poem is composed in a more recognisable epic form, a single poem divided into fourteen sections, while Kennelly holds 254 individual poems together under the generic title of the work. In the post-structuralist era, according to Terry Eagleton, 'Literature is that realm in which the reader finds himself suspended between a 'literal' and a figurative meaning, unable to choose between the two, and thus cast dizzily into a bottomless linguistic abyss by a text which has become 'unreadable'' (18) and there are certainly elements of this linguistic freefall in Cromwell that are absent from the more formally structured TGH. Kennelly develops and expands the epic form almost to the point where it deconstructs itself, yet the very lack of a fixed form reinforces Kennelly's subversive intention in Cromwell and enhances the overall mood of disruption and questioning that characterises the text.

4.1.ii. A Post-Colonial Positioning.

For Kavanagh, despite his brother's assertion that he had no political purpose, Patrick Maguire was a direct and telling rebuff to the romanticised image of the peasant. By portraying Maguire as a pathetic, frustrated and ultimately lonely figure, Kavanagh was openly challenging the dominant perception, in the early decades of the Irish Free State, of the spiritual purity and moral probity of the Irish peasant. He does this in a relatively unproblematic narrative structure, using the unusual cinematic techniques of flashbacks and broad panoramic sweeps (19), and it is through the mundanity of Maguire's existence that Kavanagh hints at the void that exists in the heart of rural Irish life. For the 1940's, Kavanagh's attack on the image of the peasant was devastating and unique and TGH stands as perhaps the most significant counter-hegemonic representation of the Irish peasant in twentieth century Irish literature, all the more daring and subversive in the censorious context of the decade. Similarly, Kennelly's purpose in writing Cromwell is to explore the mythologies that underpin Irish historical hermeneutics and consequently he is engaged in a similar process of deconstruction to that of TGH. Both these long poems provide representations of important phases in the development of contemporary Ireland and both mark significant points of opposition to the dominant ideologies of their respective eras. Whereas TGH was one of the first sustained poetic critiques of post-independence Ireland, engaging the argument over the nature of the new state, Cromwell takes up the debate over four decades later, similarly subjecting

a supposedly 'modern' Ireland to a critique of the inadequacies of its foundational historical principles. While de Valera's beloved peasant quietly emerges from TGH as a vacuous, dissatisfied, hypocritical and emasculated human being, unable and almost unwilling to alter the dreariness of his own existence, Oliver Cromwell emerges from Cromwell as a pragmatic, violent, amusing and sanguine figure who serves to highlight, amongst other things, Buffun's inadequacies and failures. Both Patrick Maguire and Oliver Cromwell, therefore, emerge as perhaps unwitting literary iconoclasts to their respective eras and it is the flexibility of form offered by the epic that allows the intended critique to be engaged with in some depth.

A strong line of development can be traced between TGH and Cromwell and this line indicates the critical role of both poems in the attempted deconstruction of central underpinning philosophies that have contributed to the construction of models of the Irish nation. While Kavanagh focused on the deconstruction of the peasant myth and its importance to de Valera's vision of 1940's Ireland, Kennelly engages in a more wide-ranging exploration of the influence of history and certain historical figures on the psyche of Buffun and concurrently on the confused psyche of the Irish nation. TGH, in many ways, broke the ground in terms of poetry's critical function in the questioning of Irish national identity and Kennelly has developed this criticism to a sequential degree. Cromwell, it could be argued, is the postmodern inheritor of the legacy of TGH in that its critical role expands the deconstruction of the peasant into a whole

variety of cultural signifiers that sheds light on the continuing hypocrisies of contemporary Ireland. By indicating the flawed philosophies that underpinned their respective social, cultural and political climates, both Kavanagh and Kennelly present a different series of images to the dominant and popular perspectives, images that seek to undermine cosy and flaccid models of identity. Both poems are indicative of their respective historical and cultural contexts yet are closely linked in terms of their critical position. Both are significant post-colonial texts, TGH marking an initial and vital moment of opposition in a climate of censorship and denial, a process accurately summed up below by Seamus Heaney, while Cromwell has the advantage of an increased intellectual freedom to explore the demons that sustain the ideologies that sought to censor TGH in the first place:

'The authoritative voice of The Great Hunger (1942) cannot be derived from the conventional notes of previous modern Irish poetry. What we have is something new, authentic and liberating. For the first time since Brian Merriman's poetry in the 18th century, a hard buried life that subsisted beyond the feel of middle-class novelists and romantic poets, a life denuded of 'folk' and picturesque elements, found its expression. And in expressing that life in The Great Hunger Kavanagh forged not so much a conscience as a consciousness for the great majority of his countrymen, raising the inhibited energies of a subculture to the power of a cultural resource' (20).

Both TGH and Cromwell, therefore, can be considered as crucial post-colonial, counter-hegemonic texts that directly challenge and reinterpret the dominant post-colonial icons of Irish identity, including the Catholic Church, the nature of colonial history, the consequences of linguistic colonisation, the role of the family, etc., and this argument will be dealt with in more detail at the end of this chapter.

4.2 Cromwell - An introduction.

While he has certainly explored the occupier/occupied dialectic in many of his early poems (21), Cromwell is Kennelly's first sustained poetic analysis of the nature of Irish history and its consequent effects not only on self but on the contemporary world. He does not fall into a cosy reading of Irish history as simply the opposition of the occupier against the occupied, a particular version of history that quickly establishes accepted stereotypes and a bi-polar perspective on relations between Britain and Ireland. The poem is an attempt to point to what Terence Brown refers to as the 'profoundly entangled history' (22) of Ireland and to indicate that the dialectic of occupier/occupied is, in contemporary reality, imploding under the weight of the complex web of inter-relationships that characterises the essential nature of the Irish/British relationship. Cromwell can be seen as a central poetic contribution to a vital cultural and political reappraisal identified by Terence Brown in 1991:

'It is, I believe, imperative that, North and South, we begin to examine honestly and openly the nature of our involvement with the neighbouring island of Britain. This I consider an imperative for national health: for a society and a culture which assiduously ignores or suppresses central facts about its existence is open to enfeebling self-delusions and consequent exploitation' (23).

One question that initially arises when the form of the poem is considered involves the epic nature of the text. Cromwell is a collection of 254 poems, mainly in sonnet form, that are thematically linked. However, the poem does not qualify as a traditional epic in that it is divided into individual poems which utilise a variety of narrative techniques. Kennelly deliberately manipulates the epic structure in Cromwell by upsetting traditional forms, much as he attempts to upset traditional perceptions of history and identity in the poems. Indeed, Cromwell provided critics with a good deal of difficulty as to its specific nature on publication. Edna Longley referred to it as 'an epic sequence' (24) while Aidan Carl Matthews called it 'a massive poem' (25) and perhaps somewhere between these two views lies a hybrid form which reflects Kennelly's intention to dislocate the mind of the reader. Interestingly, in her review, Edna Longley notes that 'Kennelly derives his aesthetics from what was liberatingly expansive in Kavanagh's The Great Hunger' and that 'Cromwell also derives from the social critique which Kavanagh directed at the new Southern state, and from the culturally specific idioms in which he cast that critique' (26).

While utilising a central narrator and following a thematic progression throughout the poems, Kennelly dislocates the narrative by articulating, at random, a variety of voices, some clearly recognisable as Buffun's and others distinctly not. Buffun does not control the voices that are articulated despite the fact that they are mainly engaged in a dialogue with his conscious and subconscious mind. This is reflective of Kennelly's view that 'poetry must always be a flight from the deadening authoritative egotism and must find its voices in the byways, laneways, backyards, nooks and crannies of self' (27). While the over-arching theme remains the perception of Oliver Cromwell in Irish history, there are few strands that hold the poems together in a recognisable epic form. The chronological progression in the poem, for example, is also disjointed with consecutive poems moving from 17th century Cromwellian Ireland to Dublin in the 1980's, thereby forcing the reader to engage in a direct comparative exercise between the respective eras. This expansion and dislocation of the epic form compliments Kennelly's unconventional approach to his subject and allows the variety of voices occupying Buffun's mind to wander at will through history and through his painful attempts at self-definition.

Of the 254 poems in Cromwell, 213 are written in a recognisable 14 line sonnet form, but again Kennelly disrupts the conventional fourteen-line iambic pentameter sonnet by upsetting the rhythm and rhyme within the lines and by deconstructing the form within the imagination of Buffun. The sonnets give the poems a loose structure within which his potentially rambling subconscious can

be more easily articulated and consequently understood. However, the freedom of expression that is so vital to the poems is maintained by Kennelly's constant reworking of the poems within the fourteen-line format. It could be argued that Kennelly is attempting to reappropriate the sonnet, a classic Elizabethan poetic form, from its historical origins by reinventing it in contemporary post-modern conditions, much as he attempts to do with history itself. Frank Kermode notes that 'the Elizabethan literary debates frequently centred on the ways in which style should mirror intention' (28) and Kennelly's use of sonnets would appear to mirror his parallel intellectual intentions of disruption and reinvention. Perhaps his reworking of the sonnet form is another attempt to understand Cromwell more deeply by immersing himself in the common literary forms with which Cromwell would have been familiar while simultaneously locating the poetic voice in the prime catalytic environment of the knowledgeable and dangerous insider. If, as Roy Foster claims, the Elizabethan English believed that 'Irish nationality had to be uprooted by the sword' (29) then Kennelly's abundant use of the sonnet as a form of poetic inquiry in his poems marks a moment of reappropriation and reconfiguration of the influence of the crucial Elizabethan era on the development of models of the Irish nation and its literature. The sonnet is now Buffun's tool, as much the articulation of the occupied as the occupier, and through its usage Kennelly can begin to exorcise the ghost of the literary form which was used by many influential figures to define the colonised Irish. Buffun's liking *for* the sonnet now becomes concurrently more understandable in the light of his

search for self-identity. In 'Master', Kennelly uses another voice, that of Edmund Spenser, to slyly indicate his intentions and he points to the significance of his own choice of the sonnet as the prime vehicle in his epic sequence:

'As relief from my Queene, I write sonnets
 But even these little things get out of hand
 Now and then, giving me a nightmare head.
 Trouble is, sonnets are genetic epics.
 Something in them wants to grow out of bounds.
 I'm up to my bollox in sonnets' Spenser said' (C,81).

In the note to Cromwell, Kennelly states that 'this poem tries to present the nature and implications of various forms of dream and nightmare, including the nightmare of Irish history' (C,5) and his choice of a dream sequence as a poetic vehicle is a significant and influential factor in the effectiveness of the poems. Buffun's imagination is the arena in which the competing voices of the past and the present do battle in an 'imagistic' (C,6) sequence of poems that deal with what Kennelly refers to as 'connection and disconnection, with inevitable attitudes of condescension and servility, exploitation and retaliation, cultivation and neglect, in the historical/political world' (30). Buffun experiences these connections in his dreams when his sub-conscious mind gives way to all the forces at play behind his waking memory. Consequently, Buffun's experience of his personal maturation is enhanced by the totality of images that are liberated in his dreams. Whatever forces, historical, familial

or sexual, that are sublimated by his conscious mind now seek a frantic and vital expression in the cauldron of his sub-conscious existence. Buffun's dreams closely parallel the necessary maturation that a post-colonial country must undergo if the colonial experience is to be assimilated into contemporary models of national identity and through the persona of Buffun Kennelly posits the opinion that models of nationhood are largely composed of undigested phantasmagoria which are used to feed politically and socially loaded concepts of the nation. Buffun's dreams provide a vehicle for the expression and deconstruction of crucial cultural signifiers that compose popular notions of an essentially ephemeral concept that is the nation. Indeed, his dreams allow all the prejudices and phobias that constitute his being to surface in an honest reappraisal of self, a process that is mirrored in the national search for identity. His dreams cannot be discounted and have to be confronted in a difficult and painful process of self-examination and self-criticism.

Sigmund Freud, in his seminal work The Interpretation of Dreams, claims that 'all the material making up the content of a dream is in some way derived from experience' (31), a claim that validates the often surreal and brutal dreams that Buffun experiences. He cannot of course have met Oliver Cromwell but has been taught to hate him to such a degree that this hate has entered his waking memory, principally in childhood. Consequently, in his dreams, Buffun engages not only with Cromwell but with the dominant formative influences in his life, many of which he may have forgotten in his waking memory but who

are given free expressive reign in his dreams. Kennelly attempts to articulate what Freud refers to as the 'dream-imagination' (p.84), a state of extreme liberation for Buffun in which his often restrained imagination, according to Freud, 'leaps into a position of unlimited sovereignty' (p.84), free from the control of his waking reason. In fact, Freud's analysis of the dream-imagination provides a valuable framework within which Buffun's dreams become self-explanatory. Freud argues that 'though dream-imagination makes use of recent waking memories for its building material, it erects them into structures bearing not the remotest resemblance to those of waking life; it reveals itself in dreams as possessing not merely reproductive but productive powers' (p.84), thus Buffun's various images of Oliver Cromwell operating a taxi business in Kerry, Edmund Spenser as an alcoholic auctioneer and William of Orange as a furniture polisher (C,151) become plausible contemporary connections between the past and the present. Indeed, these connections are a key manifestation of the influence of history on contemporary existence in that imagined characteristics inherent in the historical figure become realised in the contemporary representation of distinctive national stereotypes. The characteristics Buffun experiences in those around him, and the national characteristics he is exposed to, elicit the connections with Cromwell and others in his dream-imagination. Two crucial questions now arise: if an individual can have such a vibrant personal dream-imagination, could a collective national dream-imagination also exist? To what degree do images and icons of nationhood exist in such a collective national dream-imagination? While Freud does not directly deal

with these questions, it is central to understanding the effectiveness of Cromwell as a post-colonial text because Kennelly engages precisely in Freud's description of the processes of the dream-imagination:

'It (dream-imagination) shows a preference for what is immoderate, exaggerated and monstrous. But at the same time, being freed from the hindrances of the categories of thought, it gains in pliancy, agility and versatility' (p.84).

Buffun's dreams are certainly pliant, agile and versatile in their approach to and treatment of history. The supposed demons of Irish history, from Oliver Cromwell to William of Orange, are themselves freed by Buffun's dream-imagination into an environment where they can express opinions suppressed in the national waking memory because they clash with the dominant perception of national identity. Buffun too is free to challenge or accept whatever version he pleases as he has been liberated from his respective reason-bound existence. Kennelly allows a crucial debate over Irish national identity to take place in Buffun's dreams, a debate that ranges over, amongst other crucial national signifiers, the role of language, history and religion in the colonial and post-colonial eras. However, Buffun's dreams also portray the immoderate, exaggerated and monstrous constructions contained within the dream-imagination. The abstract nature of many of his dreams feed into his search for a more valid and disparate model of identity. Buffun, and Kennelly, are both searching for those crucial nodal points of

connection between competing histories and interpretations. His identity, in parallel with the national identity, is composed of many disparate internal voices and personalities, each contributing to what Freud refers to as 'external plastic pictures' (p.84), composite icons of identity that are based on internal intellectual and imaginative constructions. It is these 'external plastic pictures', artificial and pliant, that form the images and icons of nationhood and it is through an examination of the dream-imagination, a process undertaken by Kennelly in Cromwell, that a vital and creative deconstruction and revaluation of both the self and nation can take place. In this way, Cromwell can be viewed as an excellent literary example of the theories outlined by Benedict Anderson, Homi K. Bhabha, Colin Graham, and others who seek to analyse the unstable and often illusory nature of both individual and collective national identities (32). One of the most enduring 'external plastic pictures' of Ireland was portrayed by Eamon de Valera after the end of the Second World War, when in response to Winston Churchill's thinly veiled criticism of the Free State's official neutrality, he declared that despite being 'clubbed into insensitivity' over 'several hundred years' Ireland 'stood alone against aggression' and emerged as 'a small nation that could never be got to accept defeat and has never surrendered her soul' (33). This particular reading of history is, in K. Theodore Hoppen's words, 'at once the strength and the tragedy of nationalist Ireland's imprisonment within a special version of the past' (34). Furthermore, it validates any action taken by the Free State government to define and preserve models of nationhood

through its social, cultural and political policies. Consequently, draconian censorship laws were introduced to protect the cherished 'soul' of the nation from neo-colonial influences and gradually a politically dominated image of the nation began to emerge, an image that equated conservative political policies with strict Catholic social and cultural mores. It is similar plastic pictures that Kennelly sets out to explore in Cromwell and it is in the dream-imagination of Buffun that he finds his ultimate freedom.

4.3. The nature and consequences of linguistic colonisation in Cromwell.

The crucial debate concerning the nature and consequences of linguistic colonisation in Ireland forms the basis of one of Buffun and Cromwell's many dialogues and, as with so many of the internal debates within the poem, Kennelly identifies the multiplicity of responses that linguistic displacement can elicit without polemically authenticating one particular position. He simultaneously highlights the post-colonial angst over relative linguistic authenticity and explores the ensuing possible conflicts and resolutions. In his dream imagination, for example, Buffun is visited by a '1,000 year old soldier' (C,39) who has 'fond memories of looting and rape'. He acknowledges his role in the destruction of the native language he encountered in the course of his military career:

'Yes, I throttled words in many a throat

And saw the blood boiling in their eyes
 When they stared into the face of silence.
 I've witnessed this for centuries. Not
 A pretty sight. But out of it, for you, this
 Language I bring. Blood born, for your convenience' (C,39).

Kennelly's ubiquitous soldier personifies the physical and cultural violence involved in linguistic colonisation. The almost inevitable outcome of the conflict between the language of the coloniser and the colonised is the initial domination of the coloniser's language by military force, a process underpinned by consequent social, cultural and educational practices designed to ensure that native languages, in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's words, 'were associated with negative qualities of backwardness, underdevelopment, humiliation and punishment' (35). David Lloyd, in his book Anomalous States, notes the dilemma that lies at the heart not only of the Irish situation but of any colonial situation when he identifies two presuppositions that underpin the notion of the linguistic deprivation of the native Irish in the face of the inevitable and unstoppable advance of English:

'The notion of linguistic deprivation depends, amongst other things, on two precepts which are already loaded in the colonial situation, namely, that the only authentic language of expression, for individual or nation, is the mother tongue and that, correlatively, expression of whatever in a second language will inevitably be inauthentic, deracinated, lame. On such a basis, the hybridity of Irish English, until it is refined into

a literary medium of expression with its own regularities, can be seen only as signs of cultural damage rather than as indices of versatility' (36).

Kennelly explores these dilemmas in Cromwell and he concentrates on the complex and often dualistic responses hinted at by Lloyd. Poems such as 'A Language' (C,39) and 'Someone' Somewhere' (C,41) portray the profound sense of loss that can accompany linguistic colonisation, however difficult such a loss is to define. The voice in 'A Language' laments the passing of stories, folk-tales, place-names, local histories and other important cultural signifiers with the arrival of the colonial language and the strong inference is the crucial role of the representability of language in the formation of local and national identities. The representative nature of language lies at the heart of differing interpretations of the consequences of linguistic colonisation and an examination of its representative value will throw valuable light on Kennelly's interpretation of the function of language. Edward Said poses the critical question in Orientalism:

'The real issue is whether indeed there can be a true representation of anything, or whether any and all representations, because they are representations, are embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institutions and political ambience of the representor. If the latter alternative is the correct one (as I believe it is), then we must be prepared to accept the fact that a representation is eo ipso implicated, intertwined, embedded, interwoven with a great many other things

besides the "truth", which is itself a representation' (37).

Said locates language at what Kennelly refers to as a crucial point of 'connection' (38) and he argues that any representations of nationhood are inevitably bound up with the language of the representor. The inherent difficulty in the colonial situation is the conflict between the linguistic representations of the coloniser and the colonised, both of whom seek that elusive quality of authenticity while language itself becomes representative of political and cultural interests rather than a mere means of communication. Said argues that representations are 'interwoven with a great many other things', a proposition that highlights the dangers of linguistic reductionism in the colonial and post-colonial eras. Cromwell illuminates many of Said's impinging factors, such as economics, education, history, social class and cultural fashions, forces that conspire to shape linguistic preferences and consequently models of nationhood. Declan Kiberd has noted that in the first decades of the Free State there existed 'a pet theory that Irishness was only to be found in the Gaelic tradition' (39), an observation that points to the divisive nature of linguistic representation in the Irish post-colonial context. The concurrent attempt to deny the existence and cultural validity of a vibrant Irish English no doubt contributed to the draconian censorship laws of the early decades of the Free State and the ironic situation described by Kiberd: 'While England in the 1940's and 1950's transformed itself into a welfare state and returned its syllabi to the

modern world, the Irish continued for another decade to model their literary studies on the methods of Quiller-Couch' (40). The potentially damaging consequences of such a policy have been clearly outlined by Ngugi: 'It (colonial alienation) starts with a deliberate dissociation of the language of conceptualisation, of thinking, of formal education, of mental development, from the language of daily interaction in the home and community. It is like separating the mind from the body so that they are occupying two unrelated spheres in the same person' (41). While Ngugi's model has obvious chronological differences from the Irish experience, the long-term consequences of this alienation of language from community is one of the themes explored in Cromwell. Ngugi's sense of alienation in Kenya is raw and contemporary, while the Irish experience of linguistic dislocation spans a far longer period and the sense of alienation, it could be argued, is at a more complex and dualistic stage, yet none the less palpable.

In Cromwell, Kennelly attempts to articulate a variety of representors, voices that occasionally stand in direct opposition, in order to elicit the multi-valent hybridity and complex structure of the post-colonial linguistic condition. He has written that 'it does no harm to feel homeless in a language', a perspective that forces a climate of self-analysis in which 'the problem is to be at home in the sense of homelessness' (42). His feeling of homelessness, however, is not an acknowledgement of rootlessness, but rather an appreciation of a linguistic inheritance whose value lies, in Homi K. Bhaba's

words, 'in displaying the wide dissemination through which we construct the field of meanings and symbols associated with national life' (43). He does this by allowing the various responses to linguistic colonisation a freedom of expression in Buffun's dream-imagination, ranging from the pragmatic and utilitarian acceptance of English in the neo-colonial economic era to the personal and national identity crisis initiated by the loss of a native linguistic representation. In the poem 'What Use?', a voice expresses virtual contempt for Irish in the face of the economic necessity of emigration to Britain. The voice asks Buffun:

'Can you see me facing a foreman in England
Equipped with my native sounds, asking for a start
To prove I can use my hands
Like any other man from any other land?
That language should have been strangled at birth
To stop it wasting my heart and mind' (C,40).

This voice could easily represent any one of the 500,000 people who emigrated from Ireland between 1946 and 1961 (44), thus escaping a stagnant and hypocritical Irish society bitterly attacked by Sean O'Faolain, Frank O'Connor and Patrick Kavanagh amongst others. The voice in 'What Use?' questions the motivations behind successive government policies that paid lip-service to the ideal of an Irish-speaking Ireland while tacitly allowing the old colonial power to shore up the 'central vacuity' (45) at the heart of Irish life. There is a deep anger expressed

towards the Irish language in 'What Use?', reflective perhaps of the isolation of the Irish language by the Free State government as the prime cultural restorative tool in the post-colonial era, regardless of the massive social, cultural and economic consequences of large-scale emigration. In his book Inventing Ireland, Declan Kiberd accuses the Free State education system of producing 'with dire predictability, a people lacking in self-confidence and easily bullied by outsiders' (46) and the attitude expressed towards Irish in Kennelly's poem reflects the inherent difficulties of attaching sole importance to language as the saviour of national identity. The voice refers to the Irish language 'wasting my heart and mind', reinforcing the impression of the isolation of language revival from key economic and social policies and, it could be argued, proving ultimately counter-productive in that Irish, because it was not directly linked to job-creation schemes and other regenerative social, economic and cultural policies, became associated with the causal factors of widespread emigration. The native language, therefore, rather than eliciting crucial cultural responses in the hearts of the people, becomes a post-colonial millstone, its revival a political shibboleth to disguise the paucity of imagination and leadership that gripped the Free State in its early decades. In this poem, Kennelly depicts possibly hundreds of thousands of people labouring in the building sites of the former colonial power, accepting both the colonial language and the wage it offers, conveniently ignored by an Irish government unable to provide an economic future for its citizens while promoting an archaic language that no longer reflects the reality of the

people supposed to use it. While the post-colonial authorities bear an element of responsibility for this particular situation, Ngugi identifies the response of the voice in poems like 'What Use?' as a direct consequence of the 'cultural bomb', a devastating legacy of both colonialism and imperialism designed to ensure that the process of alienation continues even after the colonial era has come to an end. The effect of this cultural bomb is 'to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that non-achievement. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from their own; for instance, with other people's languages rather than their own' (47). This description closely parallels the opinions expressed in 'What Use?' concerning the efficacy of the Irish language. While 'that damned language' is associated with unemployment and social and personal humiliation, English presents itself as the saviour language, 'blood-born, for your convenience' (C,39), facilitating economic survival and advancement thereby guaranteeing its position in the linguistic character of the country. The longer this situation persists, the more the cultural bomb begins to infiltrate the psyche of the people to the degree that the native language becomes increasingly marginalised and its survival becomes dependant upon the financial support of governments and the intellectual credibility of a linguistic minority.

This linguistic pragmatism is, of course, just one possible response to the 'cultural bomb' outlined by Ngugi. The loss of the daily significance of a native language concurrently signals a crucial and definitive shift in the cultural, social and political development of a country and contributes significantly to the process of cultural and political colonisation. In the post-colonial era, Said points out that along with a reappropriation of the land by native people, a central cultural touchstone involves 'an almost magically inspired, quasi-alchemical redevelopment of the native language' (48), a process that another voice in Buffun's dream imagination attempts to articulate in the Irish context. Interestingly, Kennelly places 'Someone, Somewhere' as the next poem after 'What Use?', thus physically juxtaposing these two conflictual perspectives. The voice in 'Someone Somewhere' states categorically that 'I do not believe this language is dead' (C,41) and 'So long as I live my language will live', thus closely allying the native language with perceptions of self, a position directly dismissed in 'What Use?'. The voice condemns the pragmatist for believing the colonial 'lie':

'No, of course you don't hear me, why should you,
You who believe what has always been said,
Let us bury our language, our language is dead' (C,41).

However, the desire for linguistic renewal contained in this poem differs from the politically inspired attempts of the Free State governments to renew Irish while maintaining the basics of

colonial education practices and syllabi. This voice is closer to Said's 'almost magically inspired, quasi-alchemical' model of linguistic renewal, vowing to physically engage in the process of restoration in Martin Luther King type rhetoric:

'I have a notion, I have a bike
And I'm going to ride it through the back roads
Of Ireland. Each road, in its turn,
Will twist me to people, my people, whose minds
Will dance to those words buried
In their hearts. Someone, somewhere, will learn' (C,41).

The voice makes no reference to the economic advantages of English but points to the personal joy and self-knowledge that would spring from a renewal of the native language, combining both the intellectual and emotional renaissance that would ensue. The emphasis on 'my people' hints at the unifying properties of a native language, a cultural signifier that carries with it the germ of resistance to the colonial onslaught. The voice's bike ride through the backroads of Ireland is reminiscent of W.B. Yeats and Douglas Hyde's search for the essential Celtic character, the former in the villages of Sligo and the latter in the cottages of Roscommon. Kennelly's voice chooses the back roads in its search for those who will revitalise the language, suggesting an Irish equivalent of Terry Eagleton's definition of 'Englishness', at the start of the twentieth century, as 'rural, populist and provincial rather than metropolitan and aristocratic' (49). This voice believes in the restorative

cultural powers of language and determines quietly to seek out those who will join in the restorative programme, certain in the knowledge that 'someone, somewhere' will learn. It would appear that Kennelly appears deliberately to choose voices from the extreme ends of the linguistic debate, ignoring those voices representing the middle ground in favour of the polarised voices at the ends of the cultural spectrum. This practice obviously brings the debate into a clearer focus but perhaps fails to acknowledge, or at least articulate, the confused, questioning middle ground of those caught between a pragmatic acceptance of English and a sense of loss over the decline of Irish. 'What Use?' and 'Someone, Somewhere' highlight the polarisation that can occur in any cultural debate and are typical of Kennelly's analytical style. He has written that through poetry 'we are brought into closer, more articulate contact with fiercely energetic forces which are at work within and outside ourselves' (50) and it is perhaps this drive to understand these forces that leads him to focus on the extremities.

Ultimately, Kennelly does not presume to offer a solution to the linguistic dilemma of the relative authenticity, practicality and cultural significance of the two languages. Oliver Cromwell, on the other hand, is in no doubt as to his role in the imposition of English as the colonial and ultimately dominant and beneficial language of Ireland. He informs Buffun that 'your native tongue strikes me as barbarous' (C,45) and 'If the people of England are the people of God then England's language is the language of heaven' (C,45). His advice to Buffun is to study English

carefully in order to 'universalise your views' (C,45), advice that echoes Chinua Achebe's declaration in 1964 that 'I have been given a language (English) and I intend to use it' (51). Cromwell tells Buffun that 'I will be remembered as a killer of language' (C,104) while a soldier admits 'I throttled words in many a throat' (C,39). These images of the violence involved in linguistic colonisation occur frequently in Buffun's dream-imagination, personified by a skulking wolf that 'plays with the toy of my sleep' (C,48), echoing an earlier poem, published in 1968, called 'Dream of a Black Fox' (52), in which Kennelly's imagination is stalked by an imaginary yet palpable dream fear. The wolf represents the culmination of Buffun's nightmares, forcing him into an admission of the self-doubt and uncertainty that lies at the heart of his linguistic questioning. Buffun's questioning goes beyond a mere intellectual exercise into the realms of his very being:

'While he makes me doubt all that I am and am
Not, seized by the milling syllables of my name' (C,48).

The focus of Buffun's doubt is 'the milling syllables' of his name. His name is, in fact, a hybrid construction, a clever linguistic combination of Irish and English, as Kennelly has written: 'the name itself is half-Irish, u fada, and half-English - Buff, re-buff' (53). Perhaps Kennelly is hinting at the essential quality of hybridity that exists in all languages, as indeed it must exist in all concepts of a nation. Buffun is a hybrid, his English name closely paralleling the word buffoon,

,pointing perhaps to an Irish equivalent of King Lear's Fool, being, according to Kennelly, 'dangerous when he's accepted as the fool' (54). Kennelly has also pointed to the word re-buff as a constituent of Buffun's name, because through his dream imagination, Buffun rejects the labels and cliches placed upon his personal and national identity by involuntarily exploring the complex forces that have conspired to shape his identity. 'Buffun knows what Buffun knows, but may conceal it' (55) and this is a clear hint from Kennelly that Buffun is a stronger person for his nightmarish experiences in that he is engaged in a process of questioning and self-exploration, seeking the origins of his hybridity, exemplified by his name, and in the process arriving at the precarious yet ultimately liberating position of being at home in a sense of homelessness.

4.4. The role of religion in Cromwell.

'Let's get one thing clear', said Oliver, 'One thing alone:
My life's purpose is to praise the lord
Whatever I have suffered, wherever I have gone,
No matter when or where I have warred
Against The Enemy, the hand
Of The Lord has always worked for me.
I saw Heaven's lightning descend on England
And burn up idle bluster in a night.

If I conducted a terrible Surgery
On some, I pity them. They are pitiable enough.

Yet The Lord's hand guided me right.
 Whenever I killed, I killed from His love,
 His hand in mine, His ways my ways.
 For all I've done, I tender Him all praise` (C,83).

Thus, in a poem strongly reminiscent of his earlier 'Oliver Cromwell Looks At An Irish Actor Playing The Part Of Oliver Cromwell', Cromwell informs Buffun not only of his personal religious zeal but the lengths to which he is prepared to go to ensure that his interpretation of the Lord's work is carried out. This is a central and repeated justification for Cromwell throughout the poem and he genuinely appears to believe in the righteousness of his cause in Ireland. Kennelly uses Cromwell's almost unshakeable belief in his divinely inspired task to explore the nature and function of the Catholic and Protestant religions in Ireland's colonial past and the consequences for the present. Cromwell's absolute belief in the legitimacy of his cause was reflected in the conduct of his soldiers:

'One reason why Cromwell's troopers fought superbly was that they believed they were fighting the Lord's battles. Many of their chaplains stood on the extreme left wing of puritanism, and instilled in them a faith that the overthrow of tyranny in church and state was only the first stage in the unfolding of God's great purpose for England. They saw themselves as the shock-troops of a chosen second people, and their goal was the New Jerusalem - the progressive realisation of the Kingdom of God on earth` (56).

Cromwell brought this certitude to his Irish campaign and he repeatedly tells Buffon, most specifically in 'An Expert Teacher' (C,69), that he is nothing more than the executor of God's will, yet he does occasionally acknowledge his own role in the interpretation of this Divine plan. Buffon does not engage Cromwell in a debate over the religious overtones in his military campaign and gradually the impression is created of a religious fanaticism dangerously allied to a political and military machine that results in an almost irresistible force. Cromwell uses terms such as 'ordained' and 'judgement' (C,69) to reinforce his interpretation of the divine and inevitable nature of his violence in Ireland. The shedding of blood is in itself, for him, as with the Crusaders of the 12th century, a cathartic experience. 'Drowning, fire, strangling, sword and gun' (C,69) are an inherent part of Cromwell's religious expression and not merely an unpleasant side-effect of completing the Lord's work. His soldiers approach the killing of children 'with Herodean vigour' (C,57), sure of the importance and righteousness of their work. John Morrill argues that Cromwell's personal troubles during the period 1629-31, what he describes as his 'dark night of the soul', was a formative influence in his interpretation of the purpose of suffering. He notes:

'Cromwell's view of God's plan for England was to remain malleable and ever-changing. But his knowledge that God had a plan for England and that he was a part of that plan sustained him through war in three kingdoms and through a political career that brought him via regicide to the very edge of the throne

itself. The personal faith of the man who was to be Lord Protector of England, Scotland and Ireland had been forged in the crucible of a deep personal crisis' (57).

Thus there can be little doubt as to the sincerity of Cromwell's religious zeal and this fact is attested to by Kennelly in poems such as 'Oliver Writes to the Speaker of the Parliament of England' (C,55), 'Oliver to a Friend' (C,118) and 'Oliver on Fear and Love' (C,102). In these poems, however, there are elements of the ironic detachment that is a feature of Kennelly's implied criticism of ideological reductionism in the rest of the collection, and in this there are strong echoes of Kavanagh's ironic approach to his subject in TGH. Indeed, the ironic treatment of important themes is a hugely effective poetic device common to both poems and both Kennelly and Kavanagh use this ironic detachment to observe critically the environments in which their respective protagonists operate. Cromwell's religious zeal emerges as a driving force behind his actions, a sincerely held belief in the validity and sanctity of those actions, but he is singularly incapable of appreciating the brutal, dehumanising and in many ways anti-Christian consequences of his beliefs. What is most disquieting about Cromwell's beliefs is the fact that he recognises that the natural result of his interpretation of God's plan will involve the killing of those who stand in the way of the implementation of that plan. His faith has de-humanised him to the extent that he cannot subjectify the brutality being meted out by his soldiers, particularly on the residents of Drogheda. This is where Kennelly allows Cromwell to be seen, in the more

objective light of Buffun's imagination, as a mono-focal, bigoted and brutal persecutor, rather than as the Lord Protector he wished to be known as. Cromwell cannot see the huge contradictions inherent in his religion (58) where his fierce anti-Catholicism fuels his Irish campaign, and it is a situation parodied by Kennelly in 'Friends' (C,97):

'Jesus is Oliver's friend, they get on well
 Together despite the occasional
 Tiff concerning the nature of pain
 Inflicted on folk who lack the cop-on
 To comply with Oliver's ironside commands'.

In many ways, Cromwell stands accused of the very criticism he lays at contemporary Ireland in the poem 'Therefore, I Smile' (C,150) when he argues that his memory was 'an excuse for what they would fail to do', his memory being composed of 'twisted poems and stories'. Cromwell gives Jesus a voice and uses him to justify his activities. Jesus certainly has 'tendered them the terrible gift of my name' (C,150) and many thousands of people are killed by Cromwell and his soldiers in the name of Jesus. If contemporary Ireland is unable to see Oliver Cromwell as anything other than the brutal epitome of English barbarism, then Cromwell is unable to see Jesus as anything other than a justification for the violence inflicted upon his political enemies. Perhaps Kennelly is pointing to the cyclical and repetitive nature of historical reductionism where each era utilises figures from the past to justify untenable positions and where the past is raided

to yield a tailored version of the 'truth'. Kennelly is paralleling two central figures in Irish cultural history, separated both by time and space, but both having an enormous contemporary influence on the colonial and post-colonial models of Irish nationhood. Cromwell uses Jesus in much the same way as Ireland uses Cromwell, namely as a convenient and powerful symbol of an ideology that seeks validity through the voiceless. Similarly, in TGH, the voiceless, romanticised peasant is used to present an ideal of rural purity reflecting an essentially healthy model of nationhood. Kavanagh's peasant parody is viewed by the passing world as able to 'talk to God as Moses and Isiah talked' (1.667), passively deployed in a crucial cultural role without which 'the peasant base civilisation must die' (1.675). Irrespective of the awful reality of the peasant existence, an idyllic social and cultural touchstone is created to justify contemporary models of society. Kavanagh parodies de Valera's vision of the racial purity and spiritual sanctity of the peasant, whose mythical existence and protection provided moral justification for many repressive social policies. Both Kavanagh's peasant and Kennelly's Cromwell serve the purpose of deflecting attention away from more tangible causes of contemporary problems while Cromwell himself utilises Jesus to exonerate himself and his troops from any charges of brutality. Kennelly appears to suggest that both Cromwell and Jesus serve a dangerous and interactive purpose, that of a malleable, manipulative focus for prejudices, bigotries and ultimately violence. Kennelly is already attempting in Cromwell what he explicitly intended in the Preface to The Book of Judas in 1991:

'When one tries to substitute the uncertainties of altruistic exploration for the certainties of inherited hate, one is immediately disrupting and challenging one's "cultural legacy", spitting in the faces of the authoritative fathers and their revered, unimpeachable wisdom. The process of unlearning hate is a genuine insult to some, particularly those whose prejudices are called convictions' (59).

While Cromwell's religious bigotry and violence are explored in the poem, Kennelly also explores the much less discussed violence meted out by Catholics against Protestants over the course of Ireland's colonial history. The anti-Protestant nature of many of the poems hints at a deeper feeling than mere revenge for the violence inflicted by Cromwell on the Catholic population of Ireland and points towards the popularly held conviction that Irish Protestants were one step removed from the authentic Irish psyche, interestingly a view strongly held by Patrick Kavanagh (60). The close link between Irishness and Catholicism echoes Cromwell's image of God's plan for England and his notion that England 'Is an emblem of Heaven' (C,68). Indeed, the level of violence on both sides is a feature of many of the poems and Kennelly appears to be pointing towards the futile and barbarous nature of religious expression in Ireland where violence, be it physical or mental, appears to be its defining characteristic. One rebel soldier, in the poem 'A Holy War' (C,62) describes the ripping open of pregnant women's stomachs in order that 'little lords' might not escape their due in what he describes as 'a holy war'. Less heavily pregnant women were buried alive under piles

of stones or piked to death. The justification given is the holy nature of the war and the staunch defence of the Catholic faith and its spiritual leader, the Pope, by Catholic rebels. Predictably, the Catholic response to religious violence is almost identical in tone and deed to its Protestant counterpart, the Protestant religion being regarded as the essential manifestation of English colonial intent. The 'big important Protestant house' (C,58) becomes the focus of seething Catholic hatred, the residents stripped and burned and some hung, drawn and quartered in public. Protestant corpses are dug up ('Do Good' (C,60)) and 'half-hanging' (C,60) becomes the rebels favoured treatment of Protestant prisoners. The un-named Catholic in the poem 'The Cause' (C,73) notes that God 'orders us to burn all their houses, and 'all that we do is for religion', a phrase that strongly echoes Cromwell's words when he states that 'whenever I killed, I killed from his love' (C,83). Thus juxtaposed, a resolution to this conflict appears virtually impossible. God is the supporter of both causes and the justification for horrific and sadistic violence. Both Catholics and Protestants intone the same images of God and use virtually the same language to condemn each other, applying hollow labels to signify a perceived fundamental difference. Indeed, Brendan Bradshaw contextualises this violence by comparing the Irish Cromwellian experience with contemporary European 'wars of religion' and the general spirit of 'conquest and colonisation' prevalent in early modern Europe. He writes:

'The notorious Cromwellian massacres at Drogheda and Wexford in

1649 take their place, not as uniquely barbaric episodes, but as part of a pattern of violence which was central to the historical experience of the inhabitants of the island in the early modern period and it is historiographically important to note that in this regard the Irish experience was not, in itself, a unique phenomenon` (61).

While the crucial social, cultural and political role of religion in Ireland's colonial past and post-colonial present is manifested in Cromwell mainly through the graphic account of the violence handed out by Protestants on Catholics and vice-versa, these extremes point to a more complex religious debate with which Buffun appears reluctant to engage. His dream imagination is bombarded by violent images which appear precisely at moments when Buffun attempts to reflect more deeply on the consequences of his religious history and legacy. In 'Mass Rock' (C,151), for example, Buffun stumbles towards a mass rock (an unofficial site for mass, usually a prominent local stone or rock, used primarily after the establishment of the penal laws in 1704), acknowledging that neither he nor the souls who occupy his dream imagination have ever known 'peace', and he decides that in a place of solitude and reflection he will pray and attempt to understand the nature of his religious experiences. However, seated on top of the mass rock is a collection of cats 'of every hue and breed' who declare to Buffun that 'tonight it's certain some of us will bleed'. Their rallying call is 'Attack! Defend! Attack! Defend!' and consequently Buffun is denied the space and time to reflect on the peace that has passed him by. Religion is again depicted

in a violent, militaristic series of images that deliberately avoid analysis and thrive on the brutality engendered by bigotry and ignorance. The consequences of this for Buffun are serious. He is unable to find any escape from the violence in his dream-imagination and as a result he becomes increasingly detached from the Catholic culture that dominates his environment. Religion, like language, becomes a source of unease and distress, another focus for the many hatreds that Buffun experiences at first hand in his dreams. The images of burnings, mutilations and killings carried out in the name of Christ induce Buffun into a state of freefall where he reels from the icons of religion, afraid of whatever atrocities awaits him in his dreams. In 'An Enlightened Man' (C,131), a Catholic priest tells his followers that there is no violence they can inflict on a Protestant that God would condemn and he goes so far as to suggest that Catholics were created by God for the very purpose of annihilating Protestants, a sentiment closely echoing Cromwell's attitude towards Catholics. Interestingly, the priest's name is Paddy Maguire, perhaps hinting at a connection with the protagonist of The Great Hunger, a man who also experiences the largely negative nature of a brutalising Catholicism and who, like Buffun, suffers a sense of alienation and isolation as a consequence of the institutionalised church.

Buffun's religious experiences are not confined to his brutal Cromwellian dreams although these dreams certainly form a strong impression on his imagination. He also dreams of his Confirmation Day in which he has a comical exchange with the bishop:

‘‘What’s peace?’, he asks.

‘The ha-ha-harmony of the sus-sus-soul

With Gug-Gug-God’, I reply. ‘Beautiful’, smiles the trout’
(C,47).

The reduction of complex religious and philosophical ideas into the rote learning of a question and answer session points to the institutionalised church’s expectations of its followers (62). Buffun’s answers are nervously stammered out without any sense of personal reflection or mature consideration on crucial personal developmental questions such as the nature of the relationship between self and soul. The bishop echoes Cromwell’s war-like brand of Christianity when he announces that as a result of a series of stammered answers to learned questions, Buffun ‘is now a soldier of Christ’ (C,47), apparently equipped to take on an unnamed and unidentified foe. This ceremony of confirmation would appear to confirm how little progress the religious debate has made in Ireland since Cromwell’s crusade and that the only consistent element running through Buffun’s religious experiences appears to be violence, be it the obvious physical violence of the Cromwellian era or the psychological violence of Buffun’s contemporary Catholic rites of passage. The function of this exploration of the violence at the heart of Buffun’s historical and contemporary experience of religion is to heighten his self-awareness and to force him into a crucial and revealing analysis of the forces that have shaped him into what he is. Buffun cannot take his religion for granted because he is haunted by brutal and disturbing images of the damage caused in the name of religion.

His exposition and witnessing of that violence enables him to more fully understand the origin of his own complex responses to religion and so that he can ironically begin tentatively to seek the peace that he so hopelessly and helplessly defined for the trout-faced bishop on his inappropriately named Confirmation Day. The deep wounds in Buffun's psyche that have been wrought by religion can only be cleaned and healed by a confrontation with the sources of that wounding. At the end of the poems, however, Buffun is at the most difficult stage of recovery, namely that of the recognition of the problem. Kennelly has written of the importance of this confrontation:

'Reading becomes a kind of encounter with the repulsive, even the unspeakable. Returning from such encounters, we are more aware, more conscious. What we choose to do, or not to do, with our state of temporarily extended awareness, is our own affair. 'Violent' poetry, the poetry of uncompromising consciousness, the poetry of hard, raw reality, continues to do its work of dramatic demonstration, of ruthless bringing to mind, of accusation and warning. This work is difficult, discomforting and increasingly necessary' (63).

As with his reflections on the consequences of linguistic colonisation, neither Kennelly nor Buffun present an easy or circumscribed picture of Ireland's turbulent religious past or present. The overwhelmingly negative and often brutally violent images that occur in Buffun's dream imagination attest to the difficult and oppositional nature of the conflict between the

Catholic and Protestant traditions. Kennelly, however, is even-handed in portraying the brutality of both sides, thus blurring the distinction between the victim and the victimiser. The almost identical language, icons and behaviour of both Catholics and Protestants points to the common cultural inheritance of the two traditions and to a level of hatred that can only exist between those who have a deep knowledge and experience of the other. In this environment, religion, like language, becomes a convenient cultural marker of difference between the coloniser and the colonised and the adherence to a particular tradition becomes consequently more important as a mode of either domination or resistance. Buffun experiences the images of violence and repression and the result leaves him confused as to the nature of his personal religious composition. Cromwell, in Jonathan Allison's words, reflects 'the Irish demonisation of Protestants and Englishmen which is the mirror-image of Cromwellian hatred of the Irish' (64) and thus a self-perpetuating cycle is created in which religion becomes a focus for difference and intolerance. Once again in Cromwell Kennelly unpicks the threads that compose personal identity and he attempts to illustrate the potentially devastating consequences of a narrow, introspective and self-justificatory religious expression on emergent concepts of national identity.

4.5. Cromwell and History.

'By the 1960's the work of a whole generation of scholars had exploded the basis for popular assumptions about early Irish

society, the conquest, the plantations, the eighteenth-century parliament, the record of landlordism, and most of all the continuities between the various forms of nationalism: in some cases, reverting to ideas held in the past by minority opinion but contemptuously dismissed' (65).

Roy Foster's analysis of the shift in Irish history away from a pious nationalism towards an iconoclastic revisionism provides a valuable framework within which Cromwell and its significance can be more easily understood. In his essay, 'History and the Irish Question', Foster charts the move away from 'simplistic historical hero-cults' and notes that 'the Irish Sea has been reinterpreted as the centre, not the frontier, of a cultural area'. Cromwell effectively portrays Irish history as a complex and non-reductive record of the interplay of competing forces and ideologies. The process of history is one of interpretation and Buffun's problems with history arise when he confronts the interpretations that have been forced upon him by virtue of his education and upbringing. The poem presents a version of Oliver Cromwell that jars, on occasion, with popular perceptions of the 'Butcher of Drogheda', while the Lord Protector emerges from some of the poems as a caring father, a sincere Christian, a practical joker and confirmed democrat, aspects of his personality that have been largely ignored in the Irish nationalist canon. He also emerges, however, as a sexually perverted voyeur, his sexuality hovering on the edges of paedophilia and even necrophilia (66). He is unable to see the glaring contradictions in his character and it is here that Buffun strikes a blow for the revisionist and

post-colonial view of history in that he is able to admit that 'I spill my selves' (C,159) while Cromwell can only picture his role in God's divine plan and is unable to see the moral and intellectual inadequacy of his position. Kennelly is presenting Cromwell as the whole man, much as James Plunkett claimed that in his peasant portrayal in TGH, Kavanagh refused to ignore those aspects in his character that would either confirm or deny his fearsome reputation.

It is, of course, debateable as to whether Kennelly is providing a revised version of Oliver Cromwell and his role in Irish history or merely filling in the gaps in the overall picture of the historical figure. Cromwell's violence is never denied or ignored and is, at times, almost overwhelming in its barbarity and depravity and Kennelly does not shrink from the responsibility of graphically portraying this side of his character. Indeed, there are times when Cromwell's overt pleasure in violence appears almost pathological and while the poems indicting such tendencies are of course filtered through Buffun's imagination, Kennelly's list of sources in the note to Cromwell range from Christopher Hill to W.E.H. Lecky, suggesting a good deal of scholarly research to support such a picture. The massacre at Drogheda, for example, according to Roy Foster, 'is one of the few massacres in Irish history fully attested to on both sides' (67). Cromwell's tacit acknowledgment that the bloodshed at Drogheda was, in itself, a cause for 'remorse and regret' (68), indicates a side to his personality that was rarely expressed over Irish affairs. He does not deny the barbarity of

his soldiers behaviour and records, in militaristic detail, the conquest of the town. His explanation of the exemplary nature of the violence and his often used phrase to prevent 'the effusion of blood' appeared justified when both the towns of Trim and Dundalk quickly made peace with his advancing army. However, the severity of the violence cannot be avoided and even Cromwell admits to a certain regret, despite the fact that he claims, in the same breath, 'that this is a righteous judgement of God'. In her biography of Cromwell, Antonia Fraser has stated:

'The conclusion cannot be escaped that Cromwell lost his self-control at Drogheda, literally saw red - the red of his comrade's blood - after the failure of the first assaults, and was seized with one of those sudden brief and cataclysmic rages which would lead him to dissolve Parliament by force and sweep away that historic bauble. There were good militaristic reasons for behaving as he did, but they were not the motives which animated him at the time, during the day and night of uncalculated butchery. The slaughter itself stood quite outside his usual record of careful mercy as a soldier' (69).

Consequently, the demonising of Cromwell in Irish history relies principally, and it would appear fairly, on his reputation for violence and this is confirmed in Cromwell. Kennelly accepts this aspect of Cromwell's character as intrinsic to the understanding of the overall impact of Cromwell on the Irish psyche, fashioned as it is out of a cycle of repetitive sectarian violence. In fact, in portraying the less violent and more sympathetic side

to Cromwell's personality Kennelly actually emphasises the brutality of Cromwell's Irish campaign because in his letters to his daughter (C,71), for example, Cromwell expresses a caring, loving nature that wished the best for her future. In these poems he is not a 'butcher' but a doting and approachable father whose sincere christianity guides his actions. Rather than debunking the myth of the 'Butcher of Drogheda', it could be argued that Kennelly makes his violence all the more chilling and repulsive because Cromwell was obviously capable of a loving and understanding relationship with his daughters and others. A pathological killer without remorse is, in many ways, easier to understand than the schizophrenic actions of Oliver Cromwell, a man capable of emotional extremes. Kennelly, therefore, is engaged in a simultaneous process of revision and confirmation of the historical figure by portraying both the brutality and sentimentality of Oliver Cromwell. Crucially, it is Cromwell himself who is allowed to justify his actions and thus Kennelly attempts to offer an alternative reading of what could be termed a national history.

The central consequence of the function of history in Cromwell is to emphasise the unstable and volatile nature of history itself. History, in the Irish context, can so easily become, in Cromwell's words, 'echoing curses soaked in verbal bile', full of 'twisted stories' which become 'an excuse for what they would fail to do, to be, being themselves' (C,150), thus emphasising the notion of history as crutch. Notably, in 1971, F.S.L. Lyons appealed to historians for a historical revisionism that found

a clear and critical expression in the pages of Cromwell:

'The theories of revolution, the theories of nationality, the theories of history, which have brought Ireland to its present pass, cry out for re-examination and the time is ripe to try to break the great enchantment which for too long has made myth so much more congenial than reality' (70).

However, Oliver Cromwell cannot so easily exonerate his role in the creation of these twisted stories and it is this historical hermeneutical conundrum that concerns Kennelly in Cromwell. In his analysis of Irish revolutionary movements in the 19th and 20th centuries, Tom Garvin notes:

'Republican separatist ideology was both modernising and nostalgic. Revolutionary imagery in many different societies has portrayed the desirable future in themes culled selectively from a real or imaginary past, combined with an equally selective set of images of the progressive future. The vision of the future depends on the vision of the past' (71).

This is a crucial point in the attempt to unravel the role of history in the construction of the icons and images of the Irish nation and also in the attempt to understand the nature and implications of Buffin's identity crisis. Of the entirety of Oliver Cromwell's 59 years of life, only the ten months he spent in Ireland (August, 1649 - May, 1650) are considered adequate in Irish nationalist historiography to construct an overall image

of the essentially barbarous nature of his personality. This selective cull allows Cromwell to be demonised as the Butcher, despite historian Liam de Paor's comment that 'in general his (Cromwell) conduct of war compares not unfavourably with that of the late Elizabethan commanders' (72). Other prominent historians, such as J.C. Beckett, argue about the sack at Drogheda that 'there seems to be no foundation for later stories of an indiscriminate slaughter of the whole civilian population' (73), opinions which crucially place Cromwell's violence in a larger context. In accordance with the rules of engagement, for example, Cromwell offered quarter to Sir Arthur Aston, the Governor of Drogheda, and wrote 'If this is refused you will have no cause to blame me' (74). Aston refused to surrender and the attack began the next day. There is little doubt that Aston did indeed underestimate Cromwell's determination to crush Drogheda and therefore his culpability is a factor that has to be considered when assessing the massacre. It is in this larger context that Kennelly seeks to place Cromwell, pointing to the fact that Cromwell justified much of the violence as a simple retribution for the violence carried out by Catholics on Protestants in the 1641 rebellion (75). Cromwell is certainly more guilty than many others involved in Ireland's bloody sectarian conflict, but there are others with blood on their hands who have escaped the demonisation inflicted upon him. Cromwell, according to Jonathan Allison, thus 'avoids constructing the narrative of the Cromwellian campaign in simplistic moral terms, for the level of victimisation on every side is deep and unspeakably tragic' (76).

The repetitive, cyclical nature of violence in Irish history permeates Cromwell, with the initial sectarian bloodshed of the Cromwellian era radiating into the Anglo-Irish war (1919-21), the outbreak of the troubles in the North and crystallising into specific acts such as the killing of Lord Mountbatten. There is a depressing predeterminism about much of the violence, each act of inhumanity being justified on the grounds of some other equally barbaric act of 'the other side', usually Catholic against Protestant and vice-versa, as Cromwell attests to in the poem 'An Expert Teacher' (C,69). Both sides then seek to sanction the violence through a process described by David Lloyd: 'Nationalism itself requires the absorbtion or transformation of justifiable but nonetheless irrational acts of resistance into the self-legitimizing form of a political struggle for the state' (77). The siege of Drogheda therefore, whatever the intricacies and nuances of historical hermeneutics, enters the canon of Irish nationalism as the zenith and epitome of the essential nature of English colonial intent in Ireland, unmasked in all its brutal and violent manifestations. In Cromwell, Drogheda becomes a justification for nail-bomb attacks by the Provisional I.R.A. in an unspecified contemporary setting, thus bridging three hundred years of violent history. As Jonathan Allison notes:

'Cromwell is a powerful poetic study of the problem of violence in Anglo-Irish relations, although it offers little in the way of a vision of how the 'patterns of violence' might end. By tracing continuous patterns of revenge from 1641 to the present, Kennelly does adumbrate the continuities between moments of

brutal hegemonic domination and brutal resistance, although it is arguable that the poems suggest a predestined propensity to violence which is eternally inescapable. But for those who live in Ireland, this is how it often feels, and Kennelly's task has been to render that emotion of despair, rather than to provide a blueprint for a new political dispensation' (78).

Throughout Cromwell, therefore, Kennelly attempts to portray Irish history as, in Terry Eagleton's words, a 'sprawling limitless web' composed of a 'constant interchange and circulation of elements' (79) in which no fixed and definitive interpretation of Oliver Cromwell is allowed to emerge unquestioned or unchallenged. The post-colonial model of Irish history as favoured by the new Free State government and expounded by Eamon de Valera relied on an historical perspective of the honourable struggle of the Irish people against the essentially cruel nature of British rule. The complexities of the colonial relationship and the degree of social, cultural and political co-operation and inter-play was denied in favour of a polarised version of history that sought out figures like Oliver Cromwell and demonised them to the degree that the latter became symbolic, perhaps ultimately so, of the violence and moral depravity of the British colonial machine. There were influential elements within the Free State that sought to construct a fixed historical interpretation in which the past became a simple paradigm of the oppressor and the oppressed, excluding the possibility of unstable and shifting interpretations of that history and it is precisely in this framework that Kennelly

achieves his critical importance. Cromwell represents a move towards what Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge refer to as a 'new' postcolonialism which would take us beyond the oppositional post-colonialism of non-settler colonies that pivots around the moment of independence' (80). Cromwell points to an interpretation of history that resists absolute meanings and seeks to illuminate the connections inherent in any complex colonial relationship, focusing on the details that simultaneously confirm and deny existing interpretations. Terry Eagleton argues that post-structuralism 'strikes a serious blow at certain traditional theories of meaning' (81) in much the same way as Kennelly's Cromwell strikes a blow at traditional historical interpretations of Ireland's colonial past in general and Oliver Cromwell's role in that past in particular. Kennelly's stated belief in poetry as 'connection' (82) implies that the attempt to read fixed meanings into both language and history denies a crucial complexity that underpins all historical systems. By the end of Cromwell, Buffun is able only to conclude by recognising the multiplicity of selves that compose his imagination and he recognises, crucially, that the past pervades the present in an evolving thread of interpretation that is open-ended, unstable and uncertain.

4.6 Conclusion.

In the course of the poem Kennelly clearly attempts to illustrate that the apparently binary oppositions of English and Irish, Catholic and Protestant, Oppressor and Oppressed, Coloniser and

Colonised, can be viewed as inextricably linked in the dynamics of a fluid interchange of time, space and individual identity. Indeed, despite his personal suffering and questioning, Buffun offers a way out of the potentially stifling atmosphere of Ireland's colonial and post-colonial identity by loosening the rigidity of ideological stances and it is precisely this type of intellectual liberation that is offered in Cromwell. In 'Vintage', for example, Buffun reflects:

'I remember thinking, as the blood escaped
 Into the earth, that Oliver did what Oliver did.
 So did the butcher. So do I. So do we all' (C,147).

Despite the apparent simplicity, this is one of the most significant acknowledgements by Buffun that he is moving towards a more pragmatic and less traumatised acceptance of the nature of history and society. Buffun would appear to have transcended the blood that has spilled around him and what emerges is not the reasons for the shedding of the blood but the universality of the act of shedding. Everyone is guilty. Everyone has blood on their hands. This is a critical admission by Buffun and a sign that at least he is struggling to overcome the consequences of the violence and as such it is a crucial and significant point in the poem. Cromwell's assertions that he was merely doing God's work, or that the massacre at Drogheda was designed to avoid further bloodshed, and personal characteristics such as the care and concern he feels for his children and his religious sincerity, are deliberately ignored and excluded from Irish nationalist

historiography because each trait could possibly be worked 'tenaciously through to the point where it threatens to dismantle the oppositions which govern the text as a whole' (83). Add to this 'text' the atrocities carried out by Catholics on Protestants in 1641, then the edifice of Oliver Cromwell begins to look a less secure foundational principle upon which to base a nationalist political ideology. Through the interaction of Buffun and Cromwell the demonisation of the latter becomes increasingly more about Buffun's identity crisis than the reality of Cromwell's activities. It is, after all, Buffun who endures the nightmares and it is he who has to make sense of the past and not Cromwell, paralleling the responsibility placed on post-colonial societies vis-a-vis their colonial experience. Buffun even hopes that at the end of his nightmare he will be able to sit outside a pub with Cromwell 'sipping infinite pints of cool beer' (C,117), a realisation of his desire to come to terms with and accept the legacy of the past.

The freedom offered in Cromwell is the same freedom offered in TGH, namely through an engagement with what Kennelly refers to as the 'forbidden figures' (84) of the imagination, be it the Irish peasant stereotype or the ultimate manifestation of English colonial intent. By voicing these figures, both Kennelly and Kavanagh commit Benedict Anderson's 'sacrilege' (85) through their depiction of the contradictions and hypocrisies at the heart of crucial national cultural icons. Both poems undermine and corrode the hegemonies that seek to paralyse debate over concepts of personal/national identity and as such are central

to the emergence of a critical counter-culture. Cromwell is faithful to one of the central tenets of Kennelly's poetic outlook:

'There are few states as secure as living in the cliches and labels of religion and history. Ireland is, above all, the Land of Label, a green kingdom of cliches. To write poetry in Ireland is to declare war on labels and cliches. Needless to say, I find I have more than enough in my own heart and head, not to mention my language. But I try to fight them, to fight their muggy, cloying, complacent, sticky, distorting, stultifying, murderous and utterly reassuring embrace' (86).

CHAPTER FOUR - ENDNOTES

1. Seamus Heaney, Preoccupations - Selected Prose 1968-78 (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p.60.
2. Born April 17, 1936, in Ballylongford, Co. Kerry, Kennelly was educated at St. Ita's College, Tarbert, Co. Kerry (1948-53), and Trinity College, Dublin (1957-61) where he obtained a Double First in English and French. He graduated with a Ph.D from Trinity in 1966 and in 1973 he was appointed as Professor of Modern Literature, a post he currently holds. For a comprehensive bibliography see a 'Select Bibliography of Works by and on Brendan Kennelly' by Ake Persson in ed. Richard Pine, Dark Fathers into Light - Brendan Kennelly - Bloodaxe Critical Anthologies: 2 (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1994), pp. 194-224. See also the bibliography of John Mc Donagh, 'An Exploration of the Themes of Education and Childhood in the Poetry of Brendan Kennelly with Specific Reference to The Boats Are Home (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Warwick, 1991).
3. Brendan Kennelly, Cromwell (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1987), p.7 (first published by Beaver Row Press, Dublin in 1983). In text references to the poem will henceforth be abbreviated as follows - (C,15) : 'Cromwell, page 15'.
4. Private correspondence, 17/1/98.
5. See Appendix One for the full text of this poem.
6. Brendan Kennelly, A Time For Voices (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1990), p.11.
7. Fortnight (May, 1990), p.21.
8. As The Man Made of Rain is not due for publication until April, 1998, it is impossible to comment in detail on the text. However, in the pre-publicity information provided by the publishers, Bloodaxe Books, Kennelly has written: 'I had major heart surgery, a quadruple bypass, in October, 1996. The day after the operation I had a number of visions... I saw a man made of rain. He was actually raining, all his parts were raining slantwise and firmly in a decisive, contained way. His raineyes were candid and kind, glowing down, into, and through themselves. He spoke to me and took me on journeys. His talk was genial, light and authoritative, a language of irresistible invitation to follow him wherever he decided to go, or was compelled by his own inner forces to go...'
9. Brendan Kennelly, Breathing Spaces (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1992), p.12.
10. Lascales Abercrombie, The Epic - An Essay (London: Martin Secker, 1922), p.55.
11. Douglas Hyde, A Literary History of Ireland (London: T.

Fisher Unwin, 1899), p.400.

12. Desmond Egan, in his essay 'Homer's Ghost' (Peter Kavanagh, Patrick Kavanagh - Man and Poet (Newbridge: Goldsmith Press, 1987), p.208) notes Kavanagh's use of 'assonantal rhyme, a feature of Gaelic poetry', indicating Kavanagh's willingness to adapt Gaelic poetic devices in his work. However, pointing to influences on his early poetry, Antoinette Quinn (Patrick Kavanagh - Born Again Romantic (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1991) notes 'his (Kavanagh) total immersion in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century verse' (p.6) and lists the following poems as early verse that Kavanagh could recite 'by heart': 'Thomas Hood's 'The Dream of Eugene Aram', Tennyson's 'Locksley Hall', Longfellow's 'My Lost Youth', Gray's 'The Bard', the 'Ode to a Nightingale' and the opening passage of 'Endymion' (p.5). Kavanagh gives his own account of his school experience of poetry in an essay entitled 'Schoolbook Poetry' to be found in Peter Kavanagh's November Haggard (New York: Peter Kavanagh Hand Press, 1971), pp.3-5.

13. Patrick Kavanagh, Collected Prose (London: Martin, Brian & O'Keefe, 1973), p.282.

14. Oliver Taplin, 'Homer' in ed. J. Boardman, J Griffin and O. Murray, The Oxford History of the Classical World (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.60.

15. Patrick Kavanagh, Collected Poems (Newbridge: The Goldsmith Press, 1984), p.238.

16. Brendan Kennelly, Medea (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1988), p.7.

17. Antoinette Quinn, Patrick Kavanagh - Born-Again Romantic (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1991), p.142.

18. Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory - An Introduction (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p.145.

19. Between February, 1946 and July, 1949, Patrick Kavanagh was a film critic for The Standard newspaper and Peter Kavanagh gives a brief account of this in Sacred Keeper, pp.135-8. Antoinette Quinn, in Patrick Kavanagh- Born Again Romantic, p.130, notes:

'Kavanagh refers to his narrative enterprise in theatrical metaphors, yet fictional technique in TGH is really cinematic, rather than dramatic, short on dialogue, highly visual and scenically mobile. The narrator substitutes for both camera and sound recording and also serves as a voice-over. Its cinematic technique prevents this poem from settling into either tragedy or comedy, for gravity is often displaced with irony, a pathetic image spliced with a comic'.

Many of his film reviews are available (uncatalogued) in the Kavanagh Archive in the library of University College, Dublin.

20. Heaney, pp.115-6.

21. See poems such as 'The House That Jack Didn't Build' and 'The Statement of the Former Occupier' in The House That Jack Didn't Build (Dublin: Beaver Row Press, 1982), pp.10 and 13 respectively and 'The Visitor' in The Visitor (St. Bueno's hand printed limited edition, No.3, 1978), p.10. Alternatively, the poem is more easily available in A Time For Voices, pp. 41-3. In 'The Statement of the Former Occupant', for example, the former occupant of an anonymous house occupied by Jack is reluctantly forced to admit that Jack has made the rooms of his former home 'more elegant than I can say' and while vowing to remove Jack by force if necessary, he dreams of a day when he can free himself 'from my stinking pit to savour your exquisite order'. The former occupant is, consequently, a source of massive contradiction, bitterly resenting his expulsion yet admiring the changes wrought upon his property by the new occupier. This mirrors many of the inherent problems associated with the early years of the Irish Free State in which the new government sought to distance itself from the political and cultural influence of the coloniser, while maintaining, virtually intact, the colonial forms of education, judiciary and civil service. Any acknowledgement of the benefits of the colonial period would possibly have shattered the fragile image of nationhood in the immediate post-colonial era, composed as it was in a climate of opposition and civil war. Much of Kennelly's poetry can be regarded, therefore, as an attempted expression of the complexities surrounding the definition of personal identity. He articulates those he regards as voiceless and analyses the underlying and shifting influences that compose models of self and nation. He explores contradictions and seeks points of connection and intersection by posing more questions than seeking definitive answers.

22. Quoted in Edna Longley, Culture in Ireland - Division or Diversity? (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University, 1991), p.82.

23. Ibid., p.82.

24. Edna Longley, Poetry Review (Date unknown), p.47.

25. Aidan Carl Matthews, a review of Cromwell, (Newspaper, undated, copy available).

26. Longley, Poetry Review, p.46.

27. Brendan Kennelly, A Time for Voices, p.12.

28. ed. John Hollander and Frank Kermode, The Oxford Anthology of English Literature - The Literature of Renaissance England (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p.15.

29. R.F. Foster, Modern Ireland - 1600-1972 (London: Penguin, 1988), p.8.

30. Brendan Kennelly, A Time for Voices, p.13.

31. Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1954), p.11.

32. Specifically, Cromwell addresses Anderson's notion of 'ghostly national imaginings' (Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities (London: Verso, 1983) p.9.) by thoroughly examining an historical figure who was crucial in the formation of a popular version of Irish identity. Anderson argues that the process of the deconstruction of the edifice of a fixed perception of national identity must involve the painful exercise similar to the process of self-examination undergone by Buffon and one of the poem's great successes is its very engagement with a formative Irish 'national imagining' (Oliver Cromwell) and the realisation that national identity is a far more complex and inter-related matter which requires careful and honest scrutiny. The poem puts revealing flesh on the ghost of a man whose reputation helped galvanise a perception of identity fuelled by hatred and fear. Equally, the poem occupies what Homi K.Bhaba refers to as an 'innovative site of collaboration and contestation' (The Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.1-2) because it refuses to be delimited by the overwhelming discourses of nationalist or unionist histories by existing on the crucial boundaries of self and national identity. Similarly, Colin Graham asserts that post-colonial theory must examine the 'liminal spaces' (The Irish Review, No.16 (1994), p.29) that occupy the edges of perceptions of national identity, an assertion that has parallels in Bhaba's work. Graham also argues that 'there is no Irish cultural criticism which questions both the nature of and the underlying necessities for Irishness as a category' (private correspondence, 3-3-97) yet in Cromwell there certainly appears to be the stirrings of just such a questioning debate.

33. K. Theodore Hoppen, Ireland Since 1800 - Conflict and Conformity (Harlow: Longman, 1989), p.186.

34. Ibid., p.185.

35. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Decolonising the Mind - The Politics of Language in African Literature (London: James Curry, 1986), pp.15-16. In this excellent treatise on the consequences of linguistic colonisation, Ngugi argues:

'Language as communication and as culture are then products of each other. Communication creates culture: culture is a means of communication. Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. How people perceive themselves affects how they look at their culture, at their politics and at the social production of wealth, at their entire relationship to nature and to other beings. Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship with the world' (pp.15-16).

Ngugi wa Thiong'o's identification of language as a central cultural signifier points to a crucial debate over language that has important consequences for post-colonial Ireland. While the imposition of the English language in Africa created, in Ngugi's words, 'colonial alienation' (p.16) for those forced to adopt colonial models of history, geography and literature, others, such as Chinua Achebe, acknowledge 'the importance of the world language which history has forced down our throats' (ed. Williams and Chrisman, Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory - A Reader, (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p.431). Ngugi and Achebe's differing approaches to the impact of the imposition of a colonial language are closely paralleled in the internal debate that rages in Buffun's imagination over the personal and cultural consequences of linguistic colonisation. While Ngugi laments 'the lack of literary monuments in our own languages' (p.8), Achebe adopts a more pragmatic position when he declares that 'I feel the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience' (p.434), thus establishing the crux of the argument surrounding linguistic colonisation. The debate hinges on a specific model of cultural identity in which language, ethnic or colonial, plays a vital signifying role. Ngugi's position is a recognition of the validity and vitality of literature written in indigenous, ethnic and regional languages and he laments the overwhelming intellectual acceptance of English as the pre-eminent language of African literature. He equates the dominant position of English with the ultimate success of the colonial enterprise which led to 'the domination of the mental world of the colonised' (p.16) and a serious dislocation of the cultural development of the indigenous people. Achebe, on the other hand, in an essay entitled 'The African Writer and the English Writer' points to English as the language of 'mutual communication' (p.430) throughout Africa and indeed within the borders of the mainly colonially created nation states. He argues for the use of English as a specifically African mode of expression, a universal language shaped and fashioned out of the specific cultural experiences of the varied ethnic communities. He acknowledges the unifying nature of the universal language and decrys the argument that a second language cannot be used as effectively as a native language as 'compounded of half truth and half bogus mystique' (p.431). His ultimate hope for the development of African English is that 'it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings' (p.434).

36. David Lloyd, Anomalous States (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1993), p.130.

37. Edward Said, Orientalism (London: Penguin, 1991), p.272.

38. Brendan Kennelly, A Time for Voices, p.12.

39. Declan Kiberd, Inventing Ireland - The Literature of the Modern Nation (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), p.555.

40. Ibid., p.554

41. Ngugi, p.28.
42. ed. Ake Persson, Brendan Kennelly - Journey into Joy - Selected Prose (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1994), p.70
43. ed. Homi K. Bhaba, Nation and Narration (London: Routledge, 1990), p.3.
44. ed. David Cairns and Shaun Richards, Writing Ireland - Colonialism, Nationalism and Culture (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p.139. In chapter 17 of his book Ireland - A New Economic History 1780-1939 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp.420-441, Cormac O'Grada presents a detailed analysis of the economic and social conditions prevalent in Ireland in the period 1921-39 and he notes that 'plainly, in comparative terms Irish economic performance in the 1930's was unimpressive' (p.434) and despite a gradual improvement in the 1930's and 40's 'Ireland still contained some of the worst slums in Europe' (p.439), all, no doubt, contributory factors to such wide-spread emigration.
45. Cairns and Richards, p.139.
46. Kiberd, p.553.
47. Ngugi, p.3.
48. Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), p.273.
49. Eagleton, p.37.
50. Persson, p.44.
51. Quoted in Ngugi, p.7.
52. Dream of a Black Fox (Dublin: Allen Figgis, 1968), pp.51-3. The poem can be more readily found in Kennelly's 1990 collection A Time for Voices, p.63.
53. Private correspondence, 1-4-96.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. Austin Woolrych, 'Oliver Cromwell and the Rule of the Saints' in ed. R.H. Parry The English Civil War and After (London: Macmillan, 1970), p.61.
57. John Morrill, The Nature of the English Revolution (London: Longman, 1993), p.147.
58. For an interesting account of Oliver Cromwell's religious conversion see 'The Making of Oliver Cromwell' in Morrill, pp.118-148.

59. Brendan Kennelly, The Book of Judas (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1991), p.9.

60. In his essay entitled 'James Joyce' (Collected Pruse, p.260) Kavanagh wrote: 'Almost the most outstanding quality in Joyce is his Catholicism, or rather his anti-Protestantism. Joyce, through Stephen in the Portrait, must have done more damage to Protestantism than any modern apologist. His reason made him a bad Catholic but, whatever the defects of Catholicism, he saw that Protestantism was a compendium of all those defects'. Similarly, in chapter 6 of her book Patrick Kavanagh - Born Again Romantic, Antoinette Quinn explores the nature of Kavanagh's Catholicism and his distrust of Protestantism as manifested in the Revival. Roy Foster (Modern Ireland, p.453) argues that 'the emotions focused by cultural revivalism around the turn of the century were fundamentally sectarian and even racist. To a strong element within the Gaelic League, literature in English was Protestant as well as anti-national; patriotism was Gaelicist and spiritually Catholic. The formation in 1902 of a Catholic Association of Ireland indicates the ascendancy of a sectarian frame of reference: its declared object was to destroy the Protestant influences 'which form a powerful network of hostile influence, always operating in restraint of the Catholic, Celtic and therefore genuinely native element in our country'.

61. Brendan Bradshaw, 'Nationalism and Historical Scholarship' in ed. Ciaran Brady, Interpreting Irish History (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1994), pp.191-217, p.202.

62. This theme is explored in a variety of Kennelly's other poems, such as 'The Stick' and 'Catechism', which can be found in A Time for Voices, pp.20-1.

63. Persson, pp.44-5.

64. Pine, p.88.

65. R.F. Foster, Paddy and Mr.Punch (London: Penguin, 1993), p. 16.

66. See 'Honest-to-God Oliver' (C,106) and 'Performance' (C,107).

67. Foster, Modern Ireland, p.102.

68. In a letter from Dublin to the Speaker at Westminster on September 17, 1649, six days after the siege of Drogheda ended, Cromwell came close to admitting that, other than on the grounds he mentions, the bloodshed was difficult to justify. He wrote:

'I am persuaded that this is a righteous judgement of God upon these barbarous wretches, who have imbrued their hands in so much innocent blood, and that it will tend to prevent then effusion of blood for the future, which are satisfactory grounds for such actions, which otherwise cannot but work remorse and regret' (Wilber Abbott, The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell - Volume 2, 1649-1653 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press,

1939), p.127).

69. Antonia Fraser, Cromwell - Our Chief of Men (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), p.340.

70. Brady, p.146.

71. Tom Garvin, Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland : 1858-1928 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p.4.

72. Liam de Paor, The Peoples of Ireland (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1986), p.168.

73. J.C. Beckett, The Making of Modern Ireland - 1603-1923 (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), p.102.

74. Abbott, p.118.

75. In 1641, Sir Phelim O'Neill unsuccessfully led a rebellion of mainly Ulster Catholics against the parliamentary forces of Charles 1. However, at Julianstown, just outside Drogheda, they defeated a small detachment of royalist troops and briefly laid siege to the town. By 1642 they had retreated back to Ulster with little tangible evidence of success. Of the 1641 rebellion, Roy Foster (Modern Ireland, p.85) notes: 'From 22 October 1641 an attack was launched on Ulster settlers by their native neighbours, especially directed at those outside the walled towns. Possibly 4,000 were killed, not counting those who died from their sufferings as refugees. Retaliatory attacks on Catholics soon accounted for nearly as many'. On the contemporary records detailing the actions of the 1641 rebels Foster concludes (p.86): These resemble a pornography of violence, and they may indicate more about contemporary mentality than actual massacres. The circumstances of their composition, and the uses to which such evidence was intended to be put, must be borne in mind. but there is more than enough coincidence of evidence to indicate the horrific sufferings of non-combatants'.

76. Pine, p.86.

77. Lloyd, p.126.

78. Pine, p.88.

79. Eagleton, p.129.

80. Williams and Chrisman, p.289.

81. Eagleton, p.129.

82. Brendan Kennelly, A Time for Voices, p.12.

83. Eagleton, p.133.

84. Brendan Kennelly, Breathing Spaces, p.11.

85. Benedict Anderson, p.9.

86. Brendan Kennelly, Breathing Spaces, p.10.

CONCLUSION

'Rethinking the concepts of irony, hybridity, mimicry, the contact zone and transculturation in the Irish context will produce readings of Irish culture which arise out of a recognition of the claustrophobic intensity of the relationship between Britain and Ireland. It can also allow for the fractured range of complex cross-colonial affiliations which have existed within the British-Irish axis by acknowledging and adapting critical methodologies which post-colonialism has employed to disintegrate and fragment the monologism of cultural affiliation' (1).

Colin Graham's identification of the critical methodologies of post-colonial theories and their role in the dismantling of hegemonic cultural ideologies provides a crucial context in which both TGH and Cromwell find their critical relevance. Post-colonial theory, as outlined in this thesis, provides an invaluable theoretical escape from the restrictions placed on rigid and inflexible concepts of national identity and these two long poems are excellent literary examples of how such a theoretical escape can be manifested. If TGH marks an initial destabilisation of the Free State's self-perception in terms of its cultural authenticity, then Cromwell represents an Irish cultural criticism in which the very origins and boundaries of national identity are shown to be plastic and malleable and ultimately illusory. Both poems highlight the importance of maintaining an ideological alternative to monolithic interpretations of history, identity and cultural authenticity

in the framework of a continual questioning of foundational aspects of such interpretations. Post-colonial theory also overrides the separatist tendency to compartmentalise literary criticism and the poetry on which it is based and this thesis has attempted to recontextualise both The Great Hunger and Cromwell by placing them in a larger cultural, social, historical and political context. Furthermore, the application of post-colonial theory to two literary texts also undermines the separatist tendency in history and politics and creates a fertile, hybrid perspective in which the complexity of influences that inevitably comes to bear on literary texts is exemplified. Because the dilemma of post-colonial national identity is a multilayered one, post-colonial theory attempts to proffer an equally complex and interdisciplinary response. This thesis has attempted to adjust the lens through which hitherto disparate literary texts and historical events have been viewed by placing them in the overall context of a post-colonial movement. Viewed as inter-related and symbiotic moments in this post-colonial context they all make more interconnected sense.

Both TGH and Cromwell are characterised by a stylistic mixture of the tragic and the comic, the pathetic and the noble and the insensitive and the sensitive. Through the poets' use of comedy and irony the poems, in many ways, achieve their critical relevance through a mocking and subversive tone of enquiry. By distending the conventional epic format the poems seek to release themselves from the confines, not only of the literary form but the theoretical restrictions that such a form imposes. There is

a characteristically Irish use of comedy and satire that links both texts to a long tradition of Irish comic literature. However, the comedy, as Kavanagh claimed, 'is underdeveloped tragedy' (2) and both poems exist in the liminal space of a tragi-comic twilight. The poems undermine the foundations of national identity by diffracting cultural icons through a specifically Irish lens which includes religious, political, familial, urban and rural elements. These texts represent a definite reaction to the dominant, narrow interpretations of Irish identity that have traditionally been imposed by Church and State on an apparently acquiescent population. As a result of the success of this hegemonic imposition of national and cultural identity, Irish post-colonial theory is at an embryonic yet crucially important stage in its development. In this context texts such as TGH and Cromwell achieve even greater significance because of the accessibility of their literary forms and the corrosive nature of the images they present.

It is fair to say that the post-colonial debate to date has been characterised by a general tendency to overlook the Irish colonial and post-colonial experience in favour of the experience of African, Asian and Middle-Eastern societies. This thesis has attempted to highlight the importance of an exploration of the Irish colonial experience in the formation of generic post-colonial theories. Ireland's proximity to the colonial centre and its relatively long exposure to colonialism, in a variety of forms, heightens the sensitivities of Irish writers and poets to the complex undercurrents that characterise the post-colonial

identity crisis. TGH and Cromwell symbolise and express the deep need within Irish post-colonial literature to move beyond the strictures of history and a constant obsession with defining Irishness, in the case of these two poems, in terms of social and cultural exemplars such as nationalism, the peasant, Oliver Cromwell, the Irish mother and Irish Catholicism. As a consequence of the neglect of the Irish experience by many post-colonial theorists, it is somewhat difficult to theorise about the relative applicability of post-colonial theory in the Irish context. Indeed, some critics feel uneasy in the post-colonial paradigm and in effect regard post-colonial theory as operating within the old colonial dialogic framework of the coloniser and the colonised. This thesis has argued that this perspective fails to recognise the liberation offered by the theories of Benedict Anderson, Homi K. Bhaba, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Edward Said, Colin Graham, David Lloyd, Declan Kiberd and others. These theorists operate within a remarkably flexible framework where the plasticity of their concepts enables a wide application of apparently disparate ideas to come to play on previously sacred national icons and ideologies. This is the precise critical value of post-colonial theory in the Irish context and it is exemplified in the peasant deconstruction of TGH and the blitzophrenic uncertainty of Cromwell. Post-colonial theory, this thesis argues, should move beyond the confines of the concepts of nationhood, religious affiliation and cultural hegemony through a constant process of cultural and social scrutinisation, deconstruction and demythologisation. Crucially, post-colonial theory offers routes beyond the apparently monolithic, immutable

and unquestionable nature of these concepts into a realm of uncertainty. Post-colonial theory offers itself as a process of liberating, self-examination and not a definable terminal product which merely replaces the certainties it questions. It may seem superficial to suggest in conclusion that post-colonialism in the Irish context does not offer any concrete solutions to the complexities of contemporary Irish identity based as it is upon a complex and contentious past. What texts like TGH and Cromwell illustrate, when viewed in the post-colonial light, is that national identity itself can not and should not be straight-jacketed and hi-jacked by historically contextualised ideological blocs.

CONCLUSION - ENDNOTES

1. Colin Graham, 'Liminal Spaces': Post-Colonial Theories and Irish Culture' in The Irish Review, No.16 (Autumn/Winter, 1994), pp.29-43, p.41.
2. Peter Kavanagh, November Haggard (New York: The Peter Kavanagh Hand Press, 1971), p.15.

APPENDIX ONE

Unpublished poem by Brendan Kennelly entitled:

'Oliver Cromwell Looks At An Irish Actor Playing The Part Of
Oliver Cromwell'

And Yet,
What are my most daring thoughts
My bravest actions
Compared with the fair face of Christ?
Ever since I was a boy
My deepest impulse was to save
My fellow-men from error,
Error, the scourge of holy living
Beloved by God, rarer among men
Than survivors on the ground
When whipped stallions trample
Rows of bodies
To elect the souls
Worthy of heaven.
At first, I could hardly believe I was chosen
Being, they said, of sullen disposition
And so I fought with that impulse
As though it were not pure, but putrid,
But the more I struggled to master it
The more it mastered me.
Christ subdued me into mastery.
I accepted my fate,
Accepted even power, possessions, fame.
The salvation of erring men
Became my aim.

The Daily Mail said of this Irishman
Strutting his lines upon the stage
Of the National Theatre -
"Ireland's greatest actor plays the part
Of Ireland greatest foe".
Theatres I always loathed - unholy men
Playing unholy parts watched by unholy eyes.
Theatres are temples of lies.
Christ instructed me
To purge England of this abomination.
As always, I obeyed my saviour's commands
And for a moment England was rid
Of this scurrilous and painted spectacle
Leading her sons and daughters into error.
But now I find myself compelled
To watch this cocky actor play
Me
With, as the critics say, "consummate artistry".
Watching him
I see his forbears
In the streets of Drogheda
Almost eating each other in terror.
I prayed to Christ, "What am I to do

With these screaming savages?"

"Oliver", said Christ, "Exterminate the unholy ones.
Such butchery is but an act of God".

That is what lay behind then Irish episode,
A job well done, and quickly too

Though some may hear the cries

Across the centuries.

I did what God commanded me to do.

I could never understand
Why any man should imitate
Another man. A man should imitate only
God so that he may become
A conscious God among the paltry imitators
Hiding in their little plays and games.
Hence my hatred and contempt
For lying drama. In the name of the Saviour
Who could ever imitate
Me? Who could know the mind
That spoke to God and did His work
Where mad, barbaric blood
Defiled the ground that I was sent
To cleanse and conquer? This was no dramatic
Illusion. This was the real thing.
Who could ever play that part?
Who could ever speak and sing
The lines that flowed into my head
Out of the untainted mouth of Christ?
That did the work of heaven
Among the citizens of hell?
Listening to this actor's voice
Pouring over the intrigued people
In this damned National Theatre
(It is an erroneous interpretation of my life
They dare to sell
To lewd and gaping eyes)
I say
With all the authority
Vested in me by God
Lucidlofty as any summoning bell -
Only Oliver Cromwell
Could play Oliver Cromwell
Well.

Of this poem Brendan Kennelly has written (private correspondence, January 17, 1998):

'I don't think it has ever been published. I wrote it long before I embarked on Cromwell, I think. I met Niall Toibin one day in the train from Cork, it must have been the late seventies, my mother was dying, and I used to go and see her, then get back to Dublin, catching the Cork train at Limerick Junction, and one Sunday I met Toibin on that train, and he told me he'd been playing the part of Cromwell in a play in London. I wrote this poem after I got back to Dublin. I see now that the very title tells me I was interested in a difficult, challenging perspective

("And Yet" shows that Oliver begins with a qualification; he has been thinking of something else; what is to follow is an alternative. But what was he thinking of that caused him to say "And Yet"?).

APPENDIX TWO

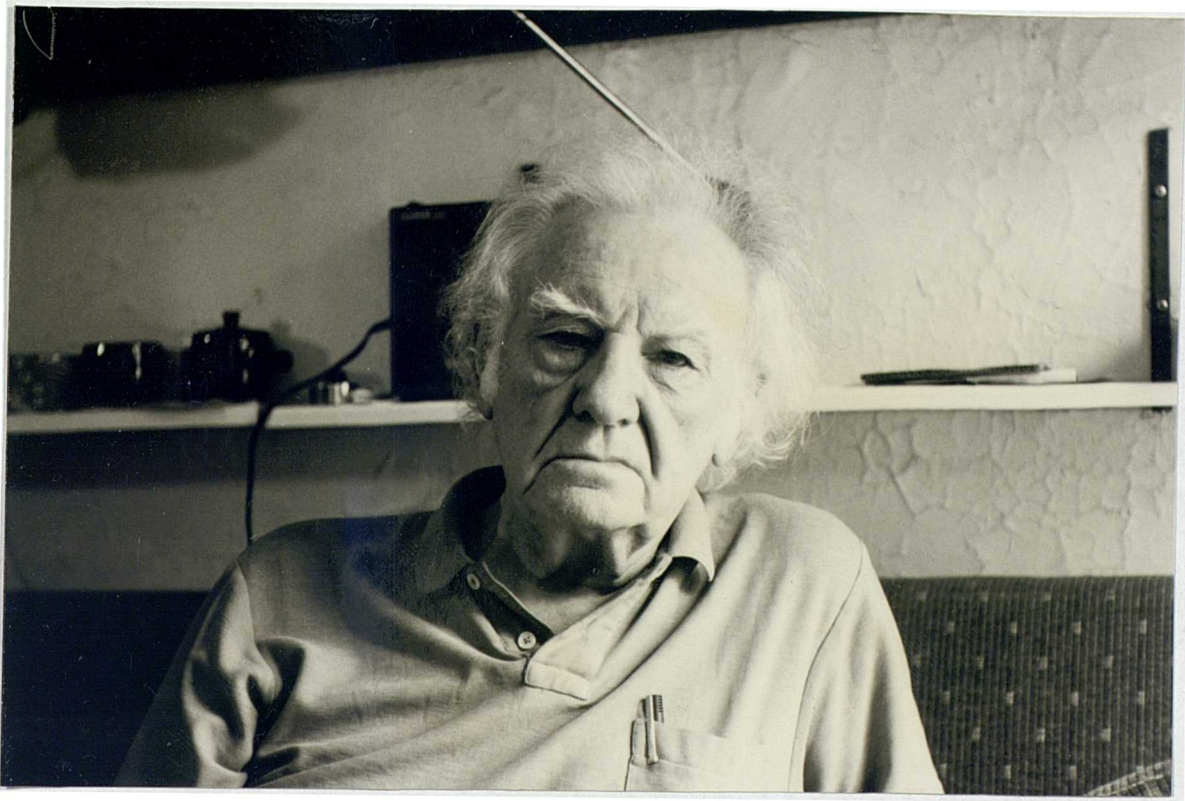
Figure One:



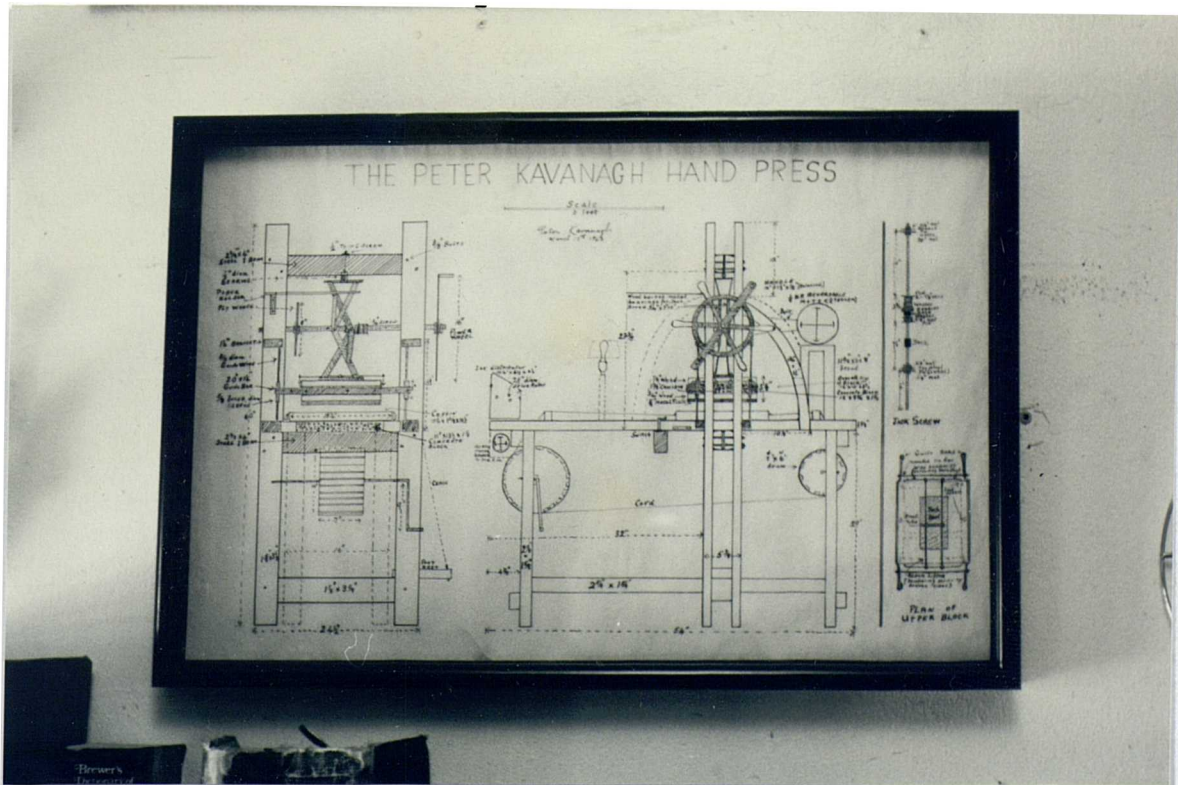
Figure Two:



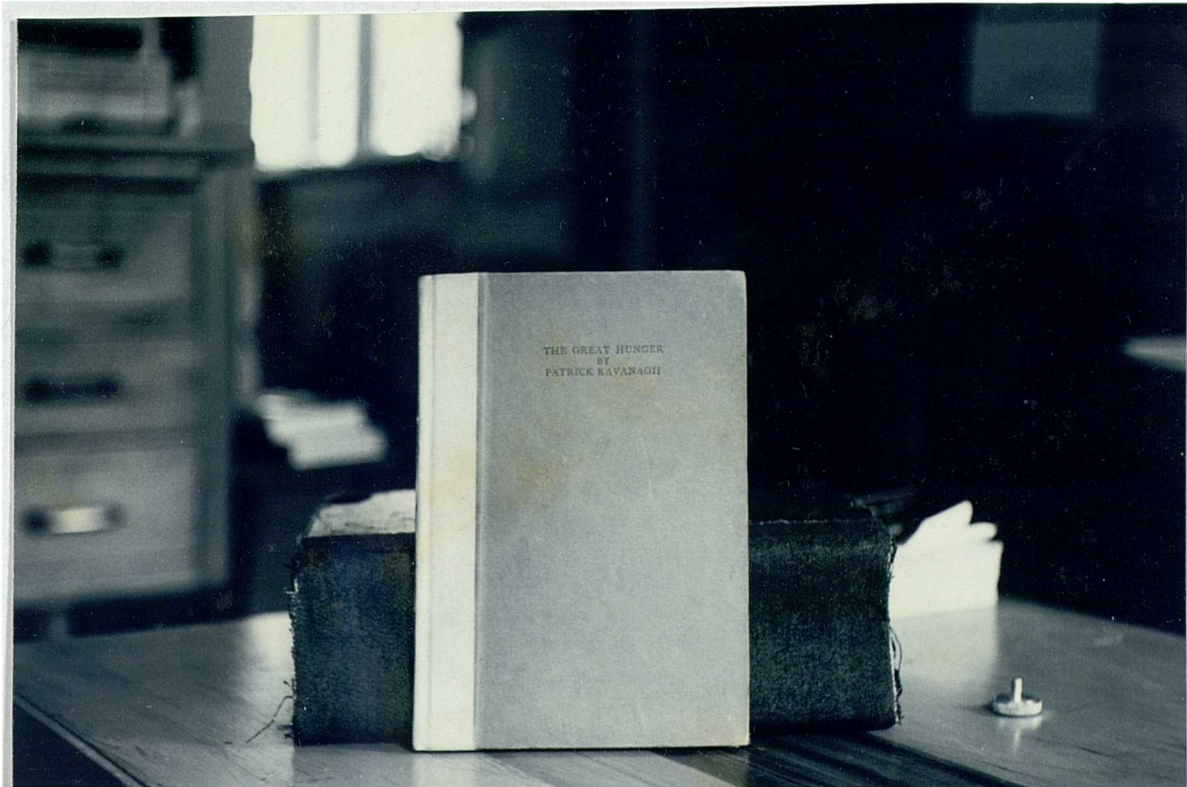
APPENDIX THREE - PHOTOGRAPHS



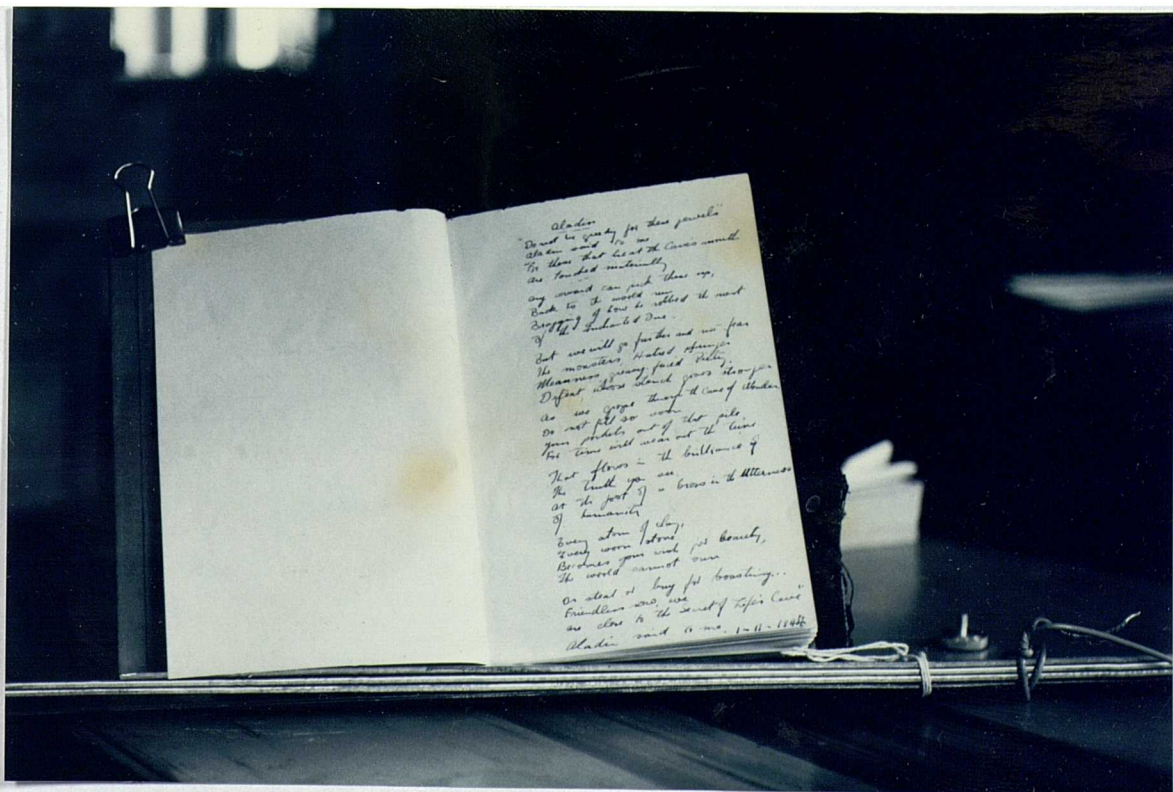
1. Portrait of Peter Kavanagh, taken in his apartment in New York on July 10, 1995.



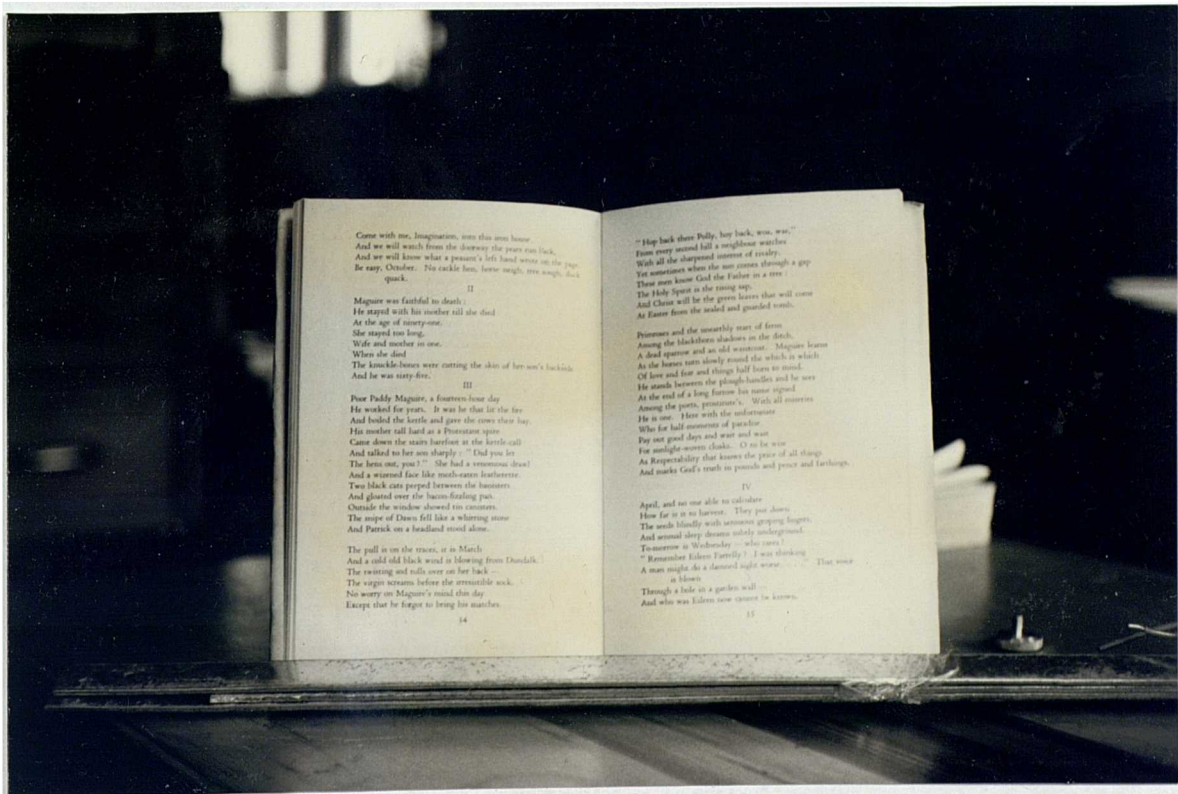
2. The original design papers for Peter Kavanagh's Hand Press on which many of Patrick's poems were printed. The press was completed in 1958 (See Lapped Furrows, p.209).



3. Peter Kavanagh's rare Cuala Press first edition of The Great Hunger, published in Dublin in 1942 and limited to 250 copies.



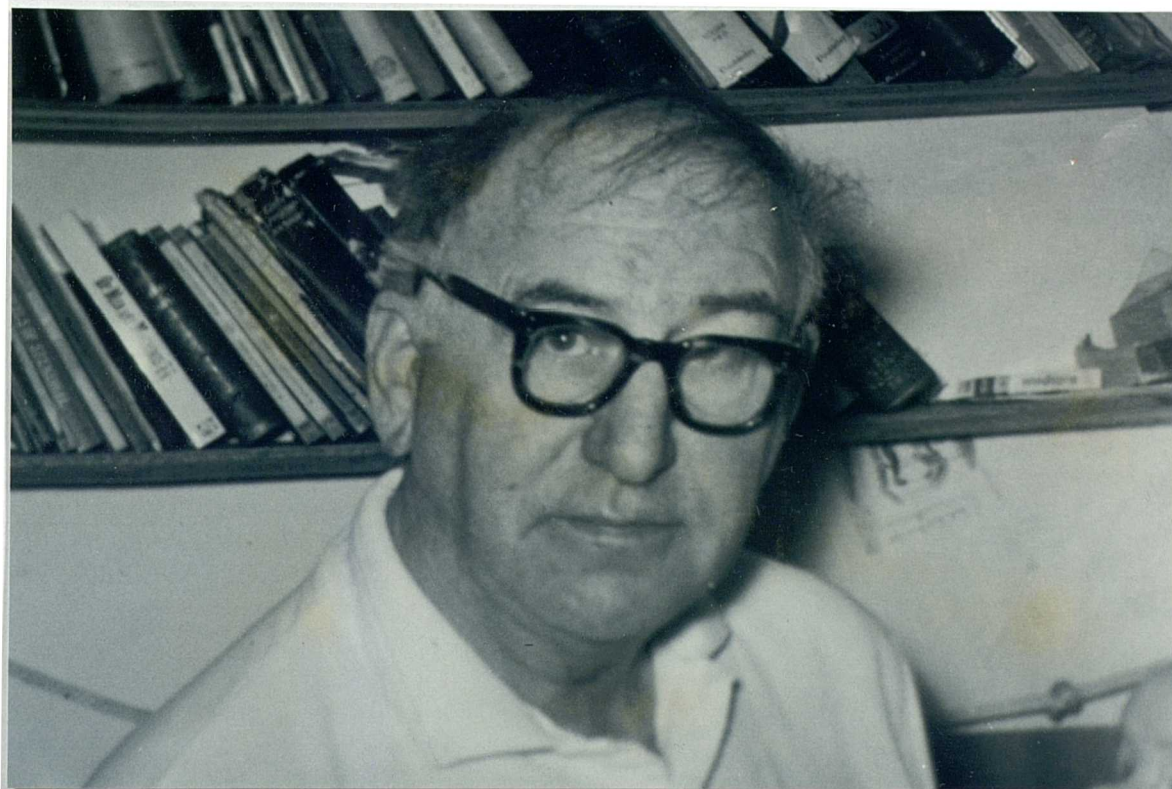
4. Fly-leaf to Peter Kavanagh's edition of The Great Hunger with the poem 'Aladin' (sic) written in Patrick's handwriting. The book was dedicated to Lord Dunsany and presented to him on November 1, 1944.



5. Section Two of The Great Hunger as published by Macmillan in A Soul For Sale in 1947 from which 23 lines were cut.



6. A previously unpublished photograph of Patrick Kavanagh taken from a 1950 studio set.



7. Patrick Kavanagh photographed in Peter's New York apartment in 1965, two years before his death.

(All photographs taken by the present author and produced with the kind permission of Peter Kavanagh).

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3. Papers of Peter Kavanagh relating to his own literary career and correspondence with Patrick.

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